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Sixth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat

I. Introduction

1. In adopting its resolution 2253 (2015), the Security Council expressed its determination to address the threat posed to international peace and security by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh) and associated individuals and groups. In paragraph 97 of that resolution, the Council requested that I provide an initial strategic-level report on the threat, followed by updates every four months. In its resolution 2368 (2017), the Council requested that I continue to provide strategic-level reports that reflect the gravity of the aforementioned threat, as well as the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering this, with the next report to be provided by 31 January 2018, followed by updates every six months thereafter.

2. I have made counter-terrorism one of my highest priorities. This is my first report since the establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism in June 2017. The Office has been mandated to enhance coordination and coherence in United Nations efforts to counter terrorism and to strengthen the provision of capacity-building assistance to Member States in response to the evolving threat of terrorism.

3. This, my sixth report on the threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security,[1] was prepared by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team,[2] in close collaboration with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and other United Nations entities and international organizations.

4. The report shows that, despite the recent setbacks experienced by ISIL, the group and its affiliates continue to pose a significant and evolving threat around the world. The United Nations is committed to supporting Member States in facing this challenge and I am confident that the newly established Office of Counter-Terrorism will help deliver an All-of-United Nations approach to support the efforts of Member

[1] See S/2016/92, S/2016/501, S/2016/830, S/2017/97 and S/2017/467.

[2] The Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.

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States to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism, in particular in relation to the threat posed by global terrorist groups such as ISIL.

II. Threat assessment[1]

A. Overview of threat

5. During the last six months, military pressure has resulted in strategic setbacks for ISIL[4] in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and the southern Philippines, as a result of which the group has been forced to relinquish strongholds in urban areas and to adapt to altered circumstances.[5]

6. The group continues to give prominence to external attacks and has lost its focus on conquering and holding territory. ISIL is now organized as a global network, with a flat hierarchy and less operational control over its affiliates.[6] Member States have highlighted that the willingness of some members of the ISIL and Al-Qaida (QDe.004) networks to support one another's attacks (S/2016/629, para. 3) remains a concern, and the potential convergence of the two networks, at least in some areas, is an emerging threat.

7. It is likely that, in the absence of its focus on conquering and holding territory, the pool of recruits for ISIL will reduce. ISIL was able to attract a wide range of individuals, including some who were eager to support the establishment of a quasi-state structure. In future, it will focus primarily on a smaller and more motivated group of individuals willing to fight or conduct attacks. In combination with increased control measures put in place by Member States, this will diminish new recruitment and the travel of foreign terrorist fighters. Overall, the global flow of such fighters into the conflict zones in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic has nearly come to a halt, with only occasional reporting of newly recruited fighters from Member States.

8. Furthermore, the structure of the ISIL core global propaganda machinery and the frequency, scope and quality of its output continue to deteriorate.[7] The group has begun to issue false claims of responsibility for attacks.[8] In addition, some of its important online magazines are no longer issued. Nevertheless, Member States highlighted that foreign terrorist fighters, ISIL members and sympathizers are still able to use social media, including encryption technology and communication tools within the dark web, to communicate, coordinate and facilitate attacks. Member States remain concerned that the threat to their homeland will be exacerbated by a growing number of "frustrated travellers",[9] the continuing risk of the recruitment by terrorist groups of insiders from within critical infrastructure[10] and the capabilities that returnees and relocators can bring to existing networks of ISIL sympathizers.

9. The fight against ISIL is entering a new phase, with more focus on less visible networks of individuals and cells acting with a degree of autonomy. This presents, to

[1] This threat assessment is based on the twenty-first report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) (S/2018/14).

[4] Listed as Al-Qaida in Iraq (QDe.115).

[5] Information provided by a Member State. This transformation has been ongoing for over a year. See also S/2017/573, paras. 16 and 17.

[6] Information provided by a Member State.

[7] S/2017/35, para. 17, and S/2017/573, para. 20.

[8] Information provided by a Member State.

[9] The term "frustrated travellers" refers to individuals who demonstrate the intention to travel to conflict zones, but are unable to do so owing to increased control measures by Member States, and remain radicalized.

[10] S/2017/573, para. 10, and resolution 2341 (2017).

a certain extent, a more difficult challenge for Member States, as well as the international community. Information sharing concerning the identity of foreign terrorist fighters, returnees, relocators and known ISIL members will remain vital. The ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list remains one of the key global instruments in this regard.[11]

10. Member States are conscious that, following the strategic military setbacks of ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, foreign terrorist fighters, in particular those from outside the immediate region, may decide to leave the conflict zones as they cannot easily blend in with the local population. Identifying these potential returnees and relocators may prove challenging. ISIL has collected travel and identification documents from incoming fighters for potential use in future travel[12] and has obtained several thousand blank Syrian passports.[13] Although the booklet numbers of the blank Syrian passports are included in the Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), Member States highlighted that their use by returnees or relocators is possible.

11. In addition, Member States bordering the conflict zones highlighted continued challenges in identifying individuals as foreign terrorist fighters, returnees, relocators or listed individuals. Biometric identification of suspicious individuals can be an effective tool to counter the threat of terrorists attempting to travel internationally using false, forged or altered travel documents. Therefore, the inclusion of biometric data, high quality pictures and fingerprints of such fighters in various regional and international databases, including the INTERPOL database on foreign terrorist fighters, remains important. On 21 December 2017, the Security Council adopted resolution 2396 (2017), updating resolution 2178 (2014) and highlighting the issue of returnees and relocators, as well as the use of biometric data. The resolution addressed a range of threats and included some of the measures outlined by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team in its reports and recommendations since 2016.

B. Regional trends

1. Middle East

12. Having been driven from Al-Qaim in Iraq and Al Bukamal in the Syrian Arab Republic, ISIL no longer holds control over urban areas in either State.[14] Clandestine terror cells remain in some cities, and small ISIL groups are located east of the Euphrates River, in the south-west of the Syrian Arab Republic and in northern Iraq. Several Member States reported that ISIL fighters have fled towards the north of the Syrian Arab Republic and may attempt to leave the country. A second small group has moved towards the south of the country.[15] Member States are currently unable to assess with confidence the number of foreign terrorist fighters remaining in either country.

13. The ability of ISIL to generate revenues was considerably weakened during the reporting period, largely owing to the group's loss of control over oil and gas fields

[11] Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1904 (2009) and subsequent related resolutions, the Office of the Ombudsperson to the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee reviews requests from individuals, groups, undertakings or entities seeking to be removed from the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list of the Security Council's ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.

[12] Information provided by a Member State.

[13] Information provided by a Member State.

[14] Information provided by a Member State.

[15] Information provided by a Member State.

in the Syrian Arab Republic.[16] Because of these and other losses, ISIL's revenues have fallen by more than 90 per cent since 2015.[17] These losses notwithstanding, the group may not have completely lost the ability to profit from hydrocarbons, and it could continue to obtain funds through extortion and the control of checkpoints.[18] As previously reported by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, ISIL is expected to return to "Al-Qaida-in-Iraq-style" financing methods, such as extortion.[19] Despite heavy military pressure, funds have continued to flow from the ISIL core to its branches.[20] Nonetheless, affiliates are increasingly looking for ways to diversify their income and to become financially independent from the ISIL core.[21]

14. ISIL is moving funds through networks and facilitators across the Middle East, using hawala systems and cash couriers,[22] and is infiltrating legitimate businesses in the region by using fronts, such as ostensibly "clean" individuals who can access the formal financial system.[23] The concern remains that ISIL may use such businesses to generate profits and invest laundered funds locally, regionally and internationally.[24] As international reconstruction funds begin to flow into liberated areas, the potential misuse of investments in the local economy, especially in businesses such as construction companies, is a significant concern.[25]

15. ISIL in Yemen remains weaker than Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (QDe.129). It retains a presence in the central and southern regions of Yemen and, according to reports from Member States, continues to recruit actively in the country. Its cells are active in Aden and Al-Bayda provinces, where the group has conducted several terrorist attacks and assassinations against Yemeni officials, in addition to a vehicle-borne improvised-explosive-device attack targeting the Ministry of Finance in Aden. ISIL continues its attempts to set up training camps in Yemen. Those camps were targeted by counter-terrorism efforts in October and November 2017. The group continues to urge its fighters not to defect to other groups and regularly releases propaganda videos, articles and imagery that aim to maintain group cohesion. This material is frequently critical of AQAP, which has announced several defections by ISIL fighters on its own media outlets.

16. ISIL also continues to target the wider region. According to Member States, it has used the prevailing security challenges in Yemen to plot, direct, instigate, resource and recruit individuals for attacks against States of the region. In September 2017, Saudi Arabia disrupted the group's attempts to attack two headquarters buildings of the Ministry of Defence in Riyadh.

2. Africa

17. Member States expressed concern at the resilience of the two separate wings of ISIL operating in Egypt. The more established affiliate, based in the Sinai Peninsula, is Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, which publicly declared allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi[26] in November 2014.[27] The group seized cash in October 2017 during a bank robbery in El Arish, North Sinai, the Governorate in which the group is now

[16] Information provided by a Member State.
[17] Information provided by a Member State.
[18] Information provided by a Member State.
[19] S/2017/35, para. 22.
[20] Information provided by a Member State.
[21] Information provided by a Member State. See also S/2017/467, para. 12.
[22] Information provided by a Member State. See also S/2017/573, para. 2.
[23] Information provided by a Member State.
[24] Information provided by a Member State.
[25] Information provided by a Member State. See also S/2017/467, para. 16.
[26] Listed as Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai (QDi.299).
[27] S/2017/35, para. 41.

concentrated. In November 2017, it attacked a mosque in nearby Al-Rawda, killing more than 300 worshippers.[28]

18. On the Egyptian mainland, cells of ISIL sympathizers have also been responsible for a string of attacks against the Coptic Christian community.[29] According to one Member State, several individuals accused of involvement in the attacks have been arrested. These cells have fewer members than Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, and are less structured. They do cooperate, but Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis does not control ISIL activity on the Egyptian mainland.[30] There is movement between ISIL in Egypt and ISIL in Libya across the desert borders, and a senior Libyan ISIL member is on the Shura Council of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis.[31]

19. Member States noted that ISIL remained determined to rebuild its capabilities in Libya. Its numbers have been reinforced in many locations by fighters transferred from southern Libya and by foreign terrorist fighters returning or relocating from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. Although its overall threat has decreased in terms of intensity, it continues to plan and execute sporadic attacks in Libya in order to demonstrate its continued relevance to its sympathizers.

20. Other ISIL affiliates in Africa are reported to have sent fighters to Libya to support and to gain the cooperation of ISIL cells located in the country.[32] Member States outlined that this relates, in particular, to training fighters, supplying weapons and logistical support. Boko Haram[33] also maintains small cells inside Libya.[34] Member States expressed concern at the potential movement of Boko Haram members to other States of the region across Libya's western and south-eastern borders.[35]

21. To generate income, ISIL in Libya runs extortion rackets through roadblocks and roving checkpoints.[36] It also continues to "tax" human smuggling and trafficking networks, although it is unclear whether it controls the networks themselves.[37]

22. Member States noted that in West Africa the threat posed by ISIL-related groups continued to spread into Mali and neighbouring States. According to one Member State, the faction of Al Mourabitoun (QDe.141) loyal to ISIL (S/2017/35, paras. 43 and 44),[38] remains a threat in Mali and Niger. Boko Haram and ISIL in West Africa are active in separate regions, and there are no reports of friction between them according to Member States. Boko Haram's increasing use of suicide bombers is a major concern for Member States.

23. In West Africa, terrorist groups finance themselves using kidnapping for ransom, theft and extortion. Member States noted that "taxation" of the flow of drugs, individuals and goods by ISIL-related groups also augments their income.[39] The continued movement of foreign terrorist fighters through the region continues to be a concern for Member States. In addition, some fighters have reportedly switched allegiance between groups to improve their economic situation.[40]

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[28] Information provided by a Member State
[29] Information provided by a Member State
[30] Information provided by a Member State
[31] Information provided by a Member State
[32] Information provided by a Member State
[33] Listed as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (QDe.138)
[34] Information provided by a Member State
[35] Information provided by a Member State
[36] Information provided by a Member State
[37] Information provided by a Member State
[38] The group calls itself "Islamic State in the Greater Sahara"
[39] Information provided by a Member State
[40] Information provided by a Member State

24. In East Africa, the Al-Qaida affiliate Al-Shabaab is more active than the emerging ISIL affiliates in Puntland and southern Somalia. Member States report that although ISIL remains weak, it has established underground cells in some regions. These cells are controlled and directed from the central command in Puntland. ISIL continues to recruit through facilitators based in countries in Europe and in Libya and Somalia.

25. ISIL's expansion and activities in East Africa were curtailed during 2017 by several factors. Member States assessed that Sheikh Abdikadir Mumin (not listed) and his subordinates are involved in a power struggle, which has paralyzed ISIL activities in the region. Since the previous report, Mumin has not directed his fighters to conduct attacks because he is unable to delegate responsibilities to his deputies, and the rivalry between Al-Shabaab and ISIL affiliates continues to undermine his influence. Al-Shabaab is determined to ensure that ISIL does not eclipse it in Somalia. Moreover, the Puntland authorities continue to crack down on ISIL, reducing its impact and operations.

26. ISIL in Yemen continues to provide material and training support to ISIL in Somalia, although the support is limited and unreliable.[41] Member States therefore consider that ISIL can no longer afford to pay its fighters at previous levels. Like Al-Shabaab, ISIL has begun to collect revenues from local populations. This development is likely to fuel further conflict between the two groups as they compete over the control of resources in their areas of operation. Former Al-Shabaab fighters who relocated to Yemen continue to facilitate the travel of foreign terrorist fighters, couriers and individuals performing logistical tasks between Somalia and Yemen.[42]

27. Human-trafficking and smuggling networks operating in the region offer covert services to various destinations, including to Libya.[43] These networks are likely to be used by relocating or returning foreign terrorist fighters, who prefer to use broken routes and to avoid travelling through cities, choosing instead to travel through remote areas to evade detection. Some Member States reported that they had arrested foreign terrorist fighters on their way to Libya to join ISIL. Member States also stated that they regularly arrested groups of returnees consisting of families of foreign terrorist fighters believed to have died in combat in Libya.[44]

3. Europe

28. ISIL continues to motivate and influence attacks in Europe, and the region remains high on the group's priority list.[45] Foreign terrorist fighters are increasingly using the Internet and social media to communicate with followers in Europe and to support their plans to conduct attacks. The dissemination of terror-attack methodologies and guidance and designs for the building of improvised explosive devices over the Internet and social media is considered a major security challenge for Member States.

29. Member States report continued links between Europe-based ISIL supporters (including Al-Qaida facilitators) and foreign terrorist fighters located in conflict zones and elsewhere. The attacks carried out in Spain in August 2017 demonstrated the potential impact of such transnational links.[46] However, during the reporting period, only a small number of newly recruited foreign terrorist fighters from Europe

[41] Information provided by a Member State.
[42] Information provided by a Member State.
[43] Information provided by a Member State.
[44] Information provided by a Member State.
[45] Information provided by a Member State.
[46] Information provided by a Member State.

travelled to the conflict zones, and the stream of returnees slowed.[47] Member States noted that returnees might increase the terrorist capabilities, in particular the bomb-making skills, of local networks and individuals, including "frustrated travellers".

4. Central and South Asia

30. The travel of foreign terrorist fighters from Central and South Asia to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic has virtually ceased. However, over the past two years, relocated foreign terrorist fighters from Central Asia have been involved in terrorist attacks in Europe, the Russian Federation and Turkey. Member States remain concerned that returnees might exacerbate the terrorism threat in this region.

31. Despite having been further weakened by Afghan and international military operations, ISIL in Afghanistan continues to mount aggressive attacks, especially in Kabul. Overall, ISIL commands between 1,000 and 4,000 fighters in Afghanistan, including former members of the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) (QDe.132), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) (QDe.010), fighters from outside the immediate region and Afghan defectors from the Taliban. Some Member States expressed concern that, over time, the presence of ethnic Uzbek and Tajik fighters in northern Afghanistan could potentially lead to an ISIL threat to Central Asia.

32. ISIL in Afghanistan has received some funds from the ISIL core, but the group recognizes that funding may not continue; it has been encouraged to become more self-sufficient. It currently lacks large internal revenue sources and will struggle to survive without support from the ISIL core. The group has generated some funds through extortion and the proceeds from agricultural production in Nangarhar Province[48] and timber production, as well as from kidnapping for ransom.[49] There is no indication that it is involved in the drug trade.[50]

33. In Pakistan, military operations conducted in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas have sought to deny ISIL the opportunity to establish an organizational structure.[51] Terrorist attacks claimed by ISIL are carried out mainly by members of local groups, with cross-border planning and support from ISIL.[52]

5. South-East Asia

34. During the reporting period, ISIL affiliates suffered significant setbacks in South-East Asia, most notably the loss of Marawi City in the southern Philippines. The loss of Marawi City followed five months of fierce urban warfare and resulted in the death of Isnilon Totoni Hapilon (QDi.204), the "emir" of ISIL in East Asia,[53] the Maute brothers[54] and the influential Malaysian militant Mahmud Ahmad.[55]

35. Nonetheless, the threat persists, and the group's losses in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic may intensify the threat to South-East Asia, as funds and fighters disperse from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.[56] The region has seen a substantial increase in terrorist plots over the past two years.[57] Furthermore, even though the

[47] Information provided by a Member State.
[48] Information provided by a Member State.
[49] Information provided by a Member State.
[50] Information provided by a Member State.
[51] Information provided by a Member State.
[52] Information provided by a Member State.
[53] S/2017/35, para. 59. See also Australia's proscription of Islamic State East Asia (see www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganizations).
[54] S/2017/573, paras. 59 and 60.
[55] Information provided by a Member State.
[56] Information provided by a Member State.
[57] Information provided by a Member State.

protracted siege of Marawi City was a significant blow to the group's ambitions in the region, some Member States asses that it represented a symbolic and propaganda victory for ISIL, and could serve as inspiration for other militants.

36. Funding from the ISIL core facilitated the siege of Marawi City. Groups in the southern Philippines received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the ISIL core, through a third country, in advance of the siege.[58] The events in Marawi City may also have enabled ISIL affiliates to generate funds through the looting of banks.[59]

37. In Indonesia, Jamaah Ansharut Daulah[60] and Jamaah Ansarul Khilafah remain key ISIL-linked networks. Both have established a presence in several provinces.[61] The ideological leader of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah is Oman Rochman (QDi.407), and Jamaah Ansarul Khilafah is led by Abu Husna (not listed), a former prisoner and once key member of Jemaah Islamiyah (QDe.092).[62] Thus far, Jamaah Ansharut Daulah has been responsible for carrying out more attacks, but Jamaah Ansarul Khilafah is considered to be a growing threat.[63]

38. Over recent years, Malaysia has disrupted several plots, including plots directed from the Syrian Arab Republic, locally inspired attacks and lone-actor attacks. The Movida nightclub bombing (which was directed by ISIL) was the only successful attack (S/2017/35, para. 60).[64] In 2017, Malaysia disrupted cells that were recruiting foreign terrorist fighters to join the fight in southern Philippines.[65]

III. Updates on responses to the evolving threat

39. The United Nations, Member States, international, regional and subregional organizations have continued to both develop new tools and to promote the more effective use of existing ones to address the evolving threat posed by ISIL, including its affiliates, supporters and returning or relocating foreign terrorist fighters. Since my last report in May 2017 (S/2017/467), the Security Council has adopted several resolutions reflecting the wide range of responses required to address this evolving phenomenon.

40. The Security Council: (a) in its resolution 2354 (2017), emphasized the need to counter terrorist narratives; (b) in its resolution 2370 (2017), urged Member States to act cooperatively to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons and called upon them to counter threats posed by improvised explosive devices and to become party to the related international and regional instruments; (c) in its resolution 2379 (2017), addressed the issue of accountability for crimes committed by ISIL in the territory of Iraq; (d) in its resolution 2388 (2017), called upon Member States to increase their capacity to proactively investigate and undertake other measures to more effectively track and disrupt human trafficking in the areas affected by armed conflict, particularly when linked or potentially linked to terrorist financing and recruitment and/or the commission of terrorist acts; and (e) in its resolution 2396 (2017), addressed the issue of foreign terrorist fighters with a particular focus on returning and relocating fighters and the new set of challenges that this new phase presents for Member States.

[58] Information provided by a Member State.
[59] Information provided by a Member State.
[60] S/2017/573, para. 62.
[61] Information provided by a Member State.
[62] Information provided by a Member State.
[63] Information provided by a Member State.
[64] Information provided by a Member State.
[65] Information provided by a Member State.

41. On 21 August 2017, the Counter-Terrorism Committee submitted to the Security Council an updated version of the "Technical Guide to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and other relevant resolutions". The Technical Guide is prepared by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate in order to assist Member States in their efforts to implement the Council resolutions on terrorism and to facilitate its provision of technical assistance to Member States.

42. Furthermore, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2396 (2017), the newly established Office of Counter Terrorism is continuing to update and coordinate United Nations efforts to address the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters under its foreign terrorist fighters capacity-building implementation plan. The plan includes 50 capacity-building projects submitted by 13 United Nations entities, addressing the full life cycle of the foreign-terrorist-fighter phenomenon, from prevention, financing, travel of foreign terrorist fighters and relocators, to prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration upon their return. The implementation of the plan is prioritized by degree of criticality based on assessments made by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. The plan, which has a total budget of $107 million over five years, is 41 per cent funded, with 8.8 per cent of the total amount coming from the Office of Counter Terrorism and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre.

A. Countering the financing of terrorism

43. Since my previous report, Member States, international, regional and subregional organizations and the private sector have continued to strengthen the integration of financial intelligence into counter-terrorism efforts. Innovative partnerships between Government agencies and private sector actors have expanded the sharing of sensitive information on terrorism-financing patterns and suspect individuals, thereby enabling law enforcement authorities to disrupt travel by foreign terrorist fighters, detect terrorists and individuals associated with terrorism networks and bring terrorists to justice.

44. Nonetheless, financial intelligence in the possession of entities in the private sector remains underused in many regions of the world. Suspicious transaction reports provided by financial institutions to identify potentially illicit activity sometimes lack key information that would support investigations by law enforcement agencies. A recent initiative of Governments, academic research centres and private-sector actors led, in October 2017, to the establishment of the Future of Financial Intelligence Sharing programme, which aims to support the sharing of financial intelligence and analysis of the impact of public-private partnership models in several jurisdictions.[66] The programme involves experts from financial institutions, law enforcement agencies and regulatory bodies.

45. INTERPOL is assisting the law enforcement agencies and financial intelligence units of Member States to trace and disrupt the flow of funds to terrorists and their supporters. Initiatives to combat the financing of terrorism include the promotion and inclusion of information on financial identities available in INTERPOL alerts as well as the development of direct relationships with financial intelligence units, aimed at bridging the gap between financial intelligence units and law enforcement agencies. The Anti-Terrorism Centre of the Commonwealth of Independent States is also working to bring together the efforts of financial intelligence units and competent authorities in combating terrorism financing.

[66] Including Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, China, Singapore and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

46. As part of its counter-financing of terrorism and financial-disruption training efforts, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) continued to carry out its counter-financing of terrorism project in countries throughout Africa, in the Gulf States and in Afghanistan, as well as to develop its practical course on the listing of terrorist entities for sanctioning. In the Middle East and North Africa region, the Office conducted several workshops on enhancing national and regional capabilities to counter the financing of terrorism.

47. Other notable initiatives include the partnership between the Office of Counter-Terrorism, through the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, and the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit. In September 2017, a regional capacity-building workshop held in Dhaka focused on third-party asset-freezing requests. The workshop was attended by officials of financial intelligence units from six member States of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. It focused on best practices related to information and intelligence-sharing, judicial oversight and law enforcement support for the implementation of asset-freezing, pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions and the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force, especially in a regional or cross-border context. The workshop also highlighted new techniques being used by terrorist groups.

48. An analysis of trends and patterns in the misuse of social media is currently being conducted jointly by the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering and the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, in close cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. In October 2017, the Financial Action Task Force adopted a report on the financing of recruitment for purposes of terrorism, which notes how the use of financial tools has helped identify terrorist-recruitment networks. The Task Force is currently reviewing available terrorism-financing disruption strategies to address terrorism-financing threats and is continuing its work on the potential misuse of the financial technology and regulatory technology industries for terrorism-financing purposes. The Task Force is also collecting risk-related information from its members on the use of virtual currencies, including their use for financing terrorism.

49. Terrorism-financing risk assessments remain central to the development of effective strategies to counter the financing of terrorism. In this respect, the African financial action task force-style regional bodies[67] held a joint meeting, from 22 to 25 January 2018, which focused, inter alia, on good practices and lessons learned in conducting terrorism-financing risk assessments. UNODC, with the support of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, is also developing a methodology to conduct dedicated national and subregional terrorism-financing risk assessments.

50. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 2331 (2016) and 2388 (2017), the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate has engaged with Member States and relevant multilateral bodies, including the Financial Action Task Force, to address potential links between terrorism financing and human trafficking. This issue is also being gradually introduced into the engagement of the Executive Directorate with Member States within the framework of assessment visits conducted on behalf of the Committee. In October 2017, the Task Force initiated an initiative aimed at examining possible links between human trafficking, money-laundering and terrorism financing.

[67] The Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group, the Inter-Governmental Task Force against Money-Laundering in Central Africa, the Intergovernmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa and the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force.

B. International law enforcement cooperation

51. Border security is the first line of defence against terrorism and organized crime, including the travel of foreign terrorist fighters, weapons-smuggling and trafficking in human beings. The United Nations and international and regional organizations have worked with Member States to expand the use of existing border-protection tools and databases, but Member States continue to face challenges in their efforts to implement comprehensive, up-to-date, human rights-compliant and gender-sensitive border-management strategies.

52. INTERPOL continues to encourage States to expand access to its secure round-the-clock police communications system (I-24/7) beyond national central bureaux to include front-line officers. However, some States continue to face challenges in the sharing of relevant information, including on foreign terrorist fighters. UNODC has significantly expanded foreign terrorist fighter-related assistance to South and South-East Asia, including for detection and interdiction through the INTERPOL I-24/7 system. The Office of Counter Terrorism, through United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, will provide assistance to Member States in West Africa and the Horn of Africa as part of its new border security management programme, developed in consultation with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. From 5 to 8 September 2017, under the capacity-building framework of the regional Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism Initiative for the Group of Five for the Sahel, the Office organized a four-day regional workshop on border security management for experts from the member States of the Group, in cooperation with its permanent secretariat and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

53. States should have several mechanisms in place to screen travellers more effectively at ports of entry. In its resolution 2396 (2017), the Security Council emphasized the importance of utilizing biometric data to enhance border security and to identify foreign terrorist fighters and other individuals linked to terrorist activity. It also requested the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, in coordination with UNODC and other relevant United Nations bodies, INTERPOL and the private sector, in collaboration with Member States, to continue to collect and develop best practices on the systematic categorization, collection and sharing of biometric data by Member States, with a view to improving biometric standards and advancing the collection and use of biometric data to effectively identify terrorists. States must ensure the responsible use of biometrics and must implement measures to protect human rights in the collection, processing, storing and sharing of such data, including the right to privacy. The Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force is working on the production of basic guiding principles for Member States in this area. With a grant from the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, both the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate are supporting the efforts of Member States, INTERPOL, the Criminal Records Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Biometrics Institute to increase awareness and understanding of how to enhance the use of biometric data in a manner that is in line with international human rights law and standards.

54. On 23 October 2017, the sharing of advance passenger information became mandatory under Annex 9 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Thus far, however, fewer than 60 States have introduced measures requiring airlines to provide advance passenger information. Over 100 Member States remain unable to effectively verify the possible presence of a foreign terrorist fighter on board an aircraft. The Office of Counter-Terrorism, in collaboration with relevant entities of the Counter-Terrorism

Implementation Task Force, is assisting Member States in establishing national advance passenger information systems, including through capacity-building consultations.

55. Member States are also required, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2396 (2017), to develop the capability to collect, process and analyse passenger name record data, in accordance with the relevant ICAO standards and recommended practices, and to ensure that such data is used by, and shared with, all competent national authorities, in accordance with international human rights law.

56. To counter the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, the Security Council, in its resolution 2368 (2017), encouraged Member States to share information, establish partnerships, develop national strategies and capabilities and strengthen efforts to prevent commercially available precursor materials and military munitions stockpiles from being utilized in the development of such devices. The continued dissemination, through the use of the Internet and social media, of information on, inter alia, terror-attack methodologies and the construction of improvised explosive devices poses additional challenges for law enforcement. project "Watchmaker", developed by INTERPOL, enables Member States to identify and track individuals suspected of involvement in the manufacture or use of explosives and provides operational and specialized support through the sharing of INTERPOL notices and warning messages on individuals manufacturing or using chemical improvised explosive devices.

57. In view of the rise in attacks perpetrated by ISIL and its supporters against soft targets, such as the tourism industry, and critical infrastructure, Member States should aim to enhance their ability to protect such targets, including by developing comprehensive national preparedness strategies. Some Member States have begun to implement such strategies, but others require assistance. In accordance with resolution 2341 (2017), the Working Group on the Protection of Critical Infrastructure including Vulnerable Targets, Internet and Tourism Security of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force is developing guidance for Member States in this area.

C. Protection of refugees and asylum seekers

58. The return and relocation of foreign terrorist fighters pose numerous challenges to the law enforcement and border control agencies of Member States. Those challenges are compounded by the continued impact of large-scale migration. International and regional organizations continue to support the efforts of States in this area. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) supports the efforts of States to uphold international protection principles while addressing legitimate security concerns. INTERPOL works with national authorities to facilitate their adoption of a holistic approach, including the use of all available INTERPOL tools and databases, as well as greater information exchange at the national and international levels.

D. International judicial cooperation

59. The need to address the evolving threat posed by ISIL and its affiliates, including the growing threat posed by returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters, has placed increased pressure on criminal justice systems and international judicial cooperation. Member States have worked to strengthen their cooperation by updating national legislation, strengthening regional and bilateral cooperation mechanisms, increasing training and resources for central authorities for mutual legal

assistance and extradition and other international cooperation focal points and increasing their use of up-to-date technology.

60. Regional organizations, including law enforcement, prosecutorial or judicial platforms, have worked to simplify and improve communications and coordination channels and to build trust among their members. In November 2017, UNODC and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate organized a regional meeting on effective central authorities for member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the aim of which was to raise awareness of the need to designate central authorities and to encourage the sharing of good practices, thus ensuring that central authorities are able to work together in an effective and expeditious manner.

61. Gaps remain, however. The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate has found that, as of September 2017, only 25 per cent of the 77 States identified as being most affected by the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon had evaluated their existing criminal laws in light of the requirements of relevant Security Council resolutions. Only 10 per cent of those States had introduced new draft legislation; 25 per cent had amended existing laws. Progress made in strengthening cooperation at the regional level should be complemented by strengthened cross-regional cooperation.

62. Efforts to bring suspected foreign terrorist fighters to justice continue to be hampered by the difficulty of collecting sufficient admissible evidence to secure a conviction. Few States are able to collect information and evidence in conflict zones. Moreover, although a wealth of digital evidence does exist, relevant authorities are often unable to preserve, collect, share or use such evidence in court. This may be due to a lack of enabling legislation, ineffective public-private sector cooperation or challenges in the sharing of such information between States.

63. In its updated Technical Guide, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate provides guidance related to appointing, training and resourcing central authorities for mutual legal assistance and extradition, enhancing joint investigation mechanisms and introducing electronic communications and universal templates into mutual legal assistance procedures. The Executive Directorate, UNODC and the International Association of Prosecutors are currently developing a practical guide for requesting and gathering electronic evidence, including from private communications service providers, based on national manuals and protocols. The guide will identify steps to be taken at the national level to gather, preserve and share electronic evidence, with the overall goal of increasing the efficacy of mutual legal assistance practice worldwide.

64. In addition to stepping up efforts to prevent terrorist attacks, including through early detection, States should also ensure that special investigative techniques are used in a manner that protects confidentiality while also ensuring adequate judicial oversight and protection of the rights of the accused. The collection, use, preservation and sharing of evidence collected through social media and in conflict zones should be further strengthened since such evidence is often critical in detecting, monitoring, investigating and bringing to justice suspected foreign terrorist fighters, including returnees and relocators.

65. In order to address new and emerging counter-terrorism challenges, States should also ensure that they: (a) criminalize foreign terrorist fighter-related offences in a consistent and appropriate manner, with full respect for human rights, thereby overcoming hurdles relating to "dual criminality" that can undermine their ability to bring to justice, prosecute or extradite terrorists; (b) continue to improve training and resourcing for central authorities and appoint international cooperation focal points that are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week; (c) proactively share

information, especially among frontline officials; (d) make better use of technologies to exchange information in line with human rights safeguards and in support of the investigative process; (e) integrate the gender dimension and ensure that women's roles and needs are reflected, including their roles as perpetrators, victims and preventers; and (f) work at the bilateral, regional and international levels to build trust and overcome real or perceived hurdles to bringing foreign terrorist fighters to justice.

66. States also face specific challenges relating to cases involving children and juveniles who are forced or deceived into travelling to conflict zones. Additional challenges are posed by children born in conflict zones, particularly those who leave conflict zones without their parents or guardians or without identifying documents that confirm their nationality and parentage. Failure by certain States to comply with their international obligations relating to the protection of children within the criminal justice system poses an obstacle to international cooperation in relation to the families of foreign terrorist fighters. In its resolution 2395 (2017), the Security Council encouraged the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate to integrate the impact of terrorism on children and children's rights into its work, especially issues relating to the families of returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters. The Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict are developing a handbook for Member States on a human-rights-based treatment of children accompanying foreign terrorist fighters. The handbook will reflect lessons learned from relevant contexts, including through the rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers, social welfare experience, cross-cultural communications and the views of religious leaders, with the Convention on the Rights of Child as the overarching framework.

67. In some Member States, children returning or relocating from ISIL-controlled territory are individually assessed to determine the appropriate care, security measures and interventions required. Since my previous report, several States have established national multidisciplinary teams to develop individually tailored treatment plans for children suspected of committing terrorist offences. The determination of the exact age of an alleged child offender returning or relocating from a conflict zone may pose challenges for prosecutors, investigators and the judiciary. Member States should ensure that any age-assessment procedures are context-specific, gender-sensitive and comply with international human rights standards.

E. Prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration

68. In view of the growing number of returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters, many Member States are paying increasing attention to prosecution strategies and rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2396 (2017), Member States are required to (a) ensure that any person who participates in the financing, planning, preparation or perpetration of terrorist acts, or in supporting terrorist acts, is brought to justice; and (b) develop and implement comprehensive and tailored prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies and protocols, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including with respect to returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters and their accompanying spouses and children, as well as their suitability for rehabilitation; and (c) to carry out such actions in consultation, as appropriate, with local communities, mental health and education practitioners and other relevant civil society organizations and actors. UNODC and other relevant United Nations agencies continue to provide technical assistance to Member States in this regard.

69. As also emphasized by the Security Council in its resolution 2396 (2017), it is crucial to ensure that rehabilitation and reintegration programmes take the gender

dimension into account. Under the guidance of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate have proposed the establishment, in 2018, within the framework of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, of an Inter-Agency Working Group on Adopting a Gender-sensitive Approach to Countering Terrorism. The Working Group will assist Member States in organizing effective, data-driven, gender-responsive and human rights-based approaches to the rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters.

70. The United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration is currently updating guidance provided by the United Nations system on this subject. The updated guidance will address the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in contexts where there are active terrorist groups, taking into consideration the intersection between such practices and the applicable international counter-terrorism framework, including the Security Council's call to develop prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for returning or relocating foreign terrorist fighters.

71. In its resolution 2349 (2017), the Security Council called on Member States of the Lake Chad Basin to urgently develop and implement, consistent with international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, as applicable, vetting criteria and processes that facilitate the prompt assessment of all persons associated with Boko Haram and ISIL who are in the custody of authorities, including persons who have been captured by, or have surrendered to, the authorities, or who are found in refugee or internally displaced persons camps. The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and UNODC have initiated activities in Chad and Nigeria to support the development of a comprehensive approach to prosecuting, rehabilitating and reintegrating persons associated with Boko Haram.

72. In early 2018, the four States of the Lake Chad Basin will engage in a regional consultation on the need for a harmonized regional approach to the treatment of persons associated with Boko Haram, with the support of additional partners, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Member States of the region would also benefit from assistance in promoting inter-agency cooperation among the military forces and the civilian investigatory and prosecutorial authorities to ensure that evidence is appropriately collected and preserved, with the aim of bringing terrorists to justice.

73. Although rehabilitation and reintegration efforts are often context-specific, some lessons learned may be more widely applicable. For example, some approaches appear to have benefited from efforts to work with, and to support, families and receiving communities at an early stage and to assess their willingness and capacity to assist with reintegration efforts before prisoners are released. Other examples demonstrate the importance of ensuring proper coordination and clear leadership in developing and implementing inter-agency and multidisciplinary models. Successful programmes must also consider the special needs of children and youth.

F. Managing the spread of violent extremism in prisons

74. In view of the growing number of foreign terrorist fighters, returnees and relocators entering the criminal justice system, the role of prisons in tackling the phenomenon has become more important. International and regional organizations and the specialized agencies have increased their efforts to assist Member States in

developing measures and programmes to prevent or counter radicalization and recruitment by terrorist and violent extremist groups in prisons.

75. The initiative of UNODC, the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate on managing the spread of violent extremism in prisons is one example of inter-agency cooperation to counter this challenge. The initiative led to the publication of the UNODC "Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons", which helps prison staff to manage the risk of radicalization in prisons and provides relevant information and technical assistance on this subject to pilot States. Specific objectives of the initiative include fostering cooperation among the relevant national authorities, strengthening prison safety and security and providing advice on prison-based disengagement programmes and social reintegration after release. Additional guidance has been developed by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the Council of Europe, the European Commission's Radicalisation Awareness Network and the Global Counterterrorism Forum. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has also provided capacity-building inputs on preventing the spread of violent extremism that leads to terrorism in prisons, as part of its multidimensional technical assistance programme on the prevention of violent extremism. The European Commission has identified the prevention of radicalization in prisons and the development of effective disengagement and deradicalization programmes as priorities in its European Agenda on Security.

76. Nonetheless significant gaps remain. There are few programmes aimed at preventing, addressing, measuring or understanding the radicalization or recruitment of female prisoners. Programmes for male prisoners are rarely duplicated for females. Programmes aimed at managing violent extremism in prisons often do not consider the special vulnerabilities of incarcerated children. In many States, children are detained alongside adult criminals, putting them at risk of mistreatment and abuse. This can make them feel more reliant on adults for protection while incarcerated, and thus more vulnerable to radicalization or recruitment.

G. Countering terrorist narratives and engaging communities in approaches to the prevention of violent extremism

77. Member States, international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector have strengthened their efforts to combat ISIL narratives and ideologies, both online and offline. Recent approaches have focused primarily on three areas: the disruption of ISIL propaganda; public-private partnerships; and counter-narrative campaigns. Governments have a crucial role to play in engaging with communities and industry to promote counter-narratives and alternative messages. A growing number of States have facilitated grassroots campaigning by providing financial and capacity-building assistance and by promoting public-private partnerships in this area.

78. Several technology companies have stepped up their efforts to counter terrorism on their platforms. In August 2017, Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube launched the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, in collaboration with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate-led ICT for Peace "Tech against Terrorism" initiative. The Forum, which launched a knowledge-sharing platform on 29 November 2017, aims to develop technological solutions, conduct research on counter-speech and share knowledge and experiences with smaller start-up technology companies, building their capabilities to prevent the exploitation of their platforms and services for terrorist purposes. The "Tech against Terrorism" initiative

has also worked with the founding members of the Forum to organize several regional workshops with smaller technology companies and civil-society representatives to share best practices, including on counter-messaging.

79. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2354 (2017), the Counter-Terrorism Committee, with the support of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Office of Counter-Terrorism, has: (a) conducted outreach to entities (including religious actors, civil society organizations and private-sector actors) with expertise and experience in crafting counter-narratives in order to strengthen its understanding of relevant good practices; (b) developed initiatives to strengthen public-private partnerships in countering terrorist narratives; and (c) maintained an up-to-date list of national, regional and global counter-narrative initiatives.

80. The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate is also leveraging the expertise of academic entities and think tanks in this field, in particular through its Global Counter-Terrorism Research Network. Based on information received so far, the Executive Directorate has developed preliminary recommendations and good practices for countering terrorist narratives through content-based responses.

81. In September 2017, UN-Women, with the support of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, and in partnership with UNDP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, organized two regional workshops in South-East and South Asia. Lessons learned from the workshops highlight the importance of: grassroots efforts to advance the values of tolerance, pluralism and understanding as components of an alternative messaging campaign; ensuring that national legal frameworks protect freedom of opinion and expression, pluralism and media diversity; integrating a gender-sensitive approach when designing and implementing campaigns; and ensuring early prevention through relevant childhood digital literacy critical-thinking programmes.

82. In July 2017, the Office of Counter-Terrorism completed phases I and II of a project on "Preventing violent extremism through strategic communications". Phase I resulted in the drafting of the United Nations strategic communications approach to preventing violent extremism. Phase II included country visits to develop a standard methodology for the provision of capacity-building to requesting Member States and United Nations entities. Preparations have now begun for the provision of support under phase III, including: (a) training workshops to raise awareness; (b) advice on ways to develop a supportive institutional framework; and (c) technical support to train government officials and others on how to implement a strategic communications framework on the prevention of violent extremism.

83. Notable progress has been achieved but significant challenges remain. Countering terrorist narratives requires consistent, long-term coordinated engagement. Pursuant to Council resolution 2354 (2017), the Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate will continue to facilitate international cooperation to implement the comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives, identify and compile existing good practices and provide clear direction, guidelines and technical support, as required.

IV. Observations

84. Despite the progress made by Member States in implementing a wide range of measures to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism, and despite recent military advances against ISIL in both Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, the group and its affiliates continue to pose a significant threat to international peace and

security. Acts of terrorism continue to undermine sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian action.

85. Full implementation of the international legal framework against ISIL and foreign terrorist fighters by all Member States would strengthen international cooperation against that threat. The recent restructuring of the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture is aimed at ensuring that the United Nations system can deliver coordinated, coherent and efficient support to Member States. Similarly, the Security Council, by its resolution 2395 (2017), extended the mandate of Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate until 31 December 2021 and emphasized the centrality of its expert assessment of the implementation of relevant Council resolutions. The resolution also underscored the essential role of the Executive Directorate within the United Nations in identifying emerging issues, trends and developments relating to the implementation of key counter-terrorism resolutions, including through the use of its Global Counter-Terrorism Research Network, which brings together research institutions worldwide to share evidence-based research findings from diverse regional perspectives. In that resolution, the Council also noted the expertise of the Executive Directorate in supporting the development and promotion of well-informed counter-terrorism responses and urged the Office of Counter-Terrorism and all other relevant United Nations bodies to take the recommendations and analysis provided by the Executive Directorate into account in the implementation of their programmes. The resolution provides for enhanced coordination between the Office of Counter Terrorism and the Executive Directorate, as well as between all relevant Security Council and relevant bodies mandated by the General Assembly.

86. The foreign terrorist fighters capacity-building implementation plan is a useful tool for coordinating the efforts of various United Nations entities to address the different aspects of the foreign terrorist fighters phenomenon outlined in this report. I encourage Member States to engage with the relevant entities involved in the implementation of the plan and to consider ways to mobilize remaining resources as needed.

United Nations A/72/723–S/2018/81

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Seventy-second session
Agenda item 65
Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 31 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 31 January 2018 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ri Yong Ho (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 65, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ja** Song Nam
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 31 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

(*Translation*)

Pyongyang, 31 January, Juche 107(2018)

I address this letter to you with respect to emerging dangerous military moves antithetical to the positive changes leading to the improvement of inter-Korean relations and easing of tension now being manifested on the Korean Peninsula.

The fact that a dramatic turning point has been made for peace and stability, national reconciliation and cooperation and reunification on the Korean Peninsula, where a touch-and-go war danger was prevailing, is entirely thanks to the noble love for the nation by the respected Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Comrade Kim Jong Un, his will for reunification based on devotion to the country and people and his great and courageous determination to safeguard peace.

Owing to our magnanimous initiative, good results are borne in the inter-Korean dialogue, thus giving joy to all fellow countrymen, and a positive atmosphere in favour of improving inter-Korean relations is created, and the international society warmly welcomes and supports this development and looks forward to seeing continued easing of tension on the Korean Peninsula.

However, the United States authorities are misleading public opinion, as if the inter-Korean dialogue is an outcome of their harshest sanctions and pressure imposed upon our country, and seeking to intentionally aggravate the situation by introducing strategic assets, including nuclear-powered aircraft carrier strike groups, into the vicinity of the Korean Peninsula at a time when north and south of Korea are charting a course of peace together.

In view of its nature and contents, scope of troops and war equipment being introduced, the United States current moves of military reinforcements are designed to make a pre-emptive strike against the DPRK, and this is a primary factor which would block the inter-Korean reconciliation process and drive the situation of the Korean Peninsula into an unpredictable dangerous phase.

On the other hand, the United States is openly stating that it will conduct a large-scale aggressive joint military exercise against the DPRK immediately after the Winter Olympic Games.

It is a fact acknowledged by the whole world that, whenever joint military exercises took place, the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula were gravely threatened and inter-Korean mistrust and confrontation reached the top, thus creating great difficulties and obstacles ahead of hard-won dialogues.

We will make every effort to improve inter-Korean relations in the future too, but never sit idle with regard to the sinister act of throwing a wet blanket over our efforts.

In case the hard-won atmosphere in favour of improving inter-Korean relations and easing tensions is undermined owing to the United States manoeuvres aggravating the situation by introducing nuclear war equipment in and around the Korean Peninsula, the United States would never escape from that responsibility.

As a matter of course, the United Nations should not keep silent as to the United States dangerous game of aggravating the situation in and around the Korean Peninsula and driving the whole world into a possible disaster of nuclear war.

I express my expectation that you will pay serious attention to the United States deployment of nuclear war equipment and its manoeuvres to provoke a nuclear war, which will undermine the improvement of inter-Korean relations and the easing of tensions, and to exerting all your efforts to completely terminate these manoeuvres, in line with your mission as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations.

And, as an immediate step forward, I would like to request you to take up with the Security Council, in line with rule 6 of its provisional rules of procedure, the issue of welcoming the process of improved inter-Korean relations and discouraging the neighbouring countries from disturbing the process.

(*Signed*) **Ri** Yong Ho
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Democratic People's Republic of Korea

United Nations S/2018/82

Security Council

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English
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Identical letters dated 1 February 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, and further to our previous letters regarding the Turkish regime's continued violations of the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, its attacks against the sovereignty and territorial unity and integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, its open support for terrorism and its threat to regional and international peace and security, as well as the failure of the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility to put an end to the Turkish regime's attacks and crimes and to hold it accountable, and in response to the letter from the representative of the Turkish regime dated 20 January 2018 (S/2018/53), I should like to convey to you the following information:

The Turkish regime continues to spread lies that no longer convince anyone. It is attempting to justify its military attacks against the Syrian Arab Republic on the basis of the concept of self-defence as set forth in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. That is the same basis on which the so-called "international coalition" led by the United States has justified the appalling crimes it has perpetrated in Syria against innocent civilians.

The reluctance of the Security Council to carry out its duty to prevent the attacks being launched by the so-called "international coalition" led by the United States of America against the Syrian Arab Republic under the pretext of self-defence as provided for in Article 51 of the Charter, and its failure to put an end to the abuse of that article as a pretext for violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity and unity of States, have allowed the Turkish regime to use that same pretext for launching a new attack against the Syrian Arab Republic. Despite the claims being purveyed by both the international coalition and the Turkish regime, Article 51 of the Charter and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice handed down on 9 July 2004 in the matter of the separation wall built by the Israeli occupation authorities in occupied Palestinian territory both make clear that the type of attack that gives a State the right of self-defence must come from another State, not from individuals or terrorist organizations.

The Syrian Arab Republic also rejects the attempt by the Turkish regime's letter to rely on Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014). None of those resolutions give Member States the right to violate the sovereignty of other States and launch military operations against their territories on the pretext of combating terrorism. On the contrary, resolution 2178 (2014) provides that international cooperation and any measures taken by Member States to prevent

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and combat terrorism must comply fully with the Charter of the United Nations. It is ironic that the Turkish regime should attempt to justify its military aggression on the basis of resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014) when, instead of complying with those two resolutions, it is systematically violating their provisions. In particular, it is violating paragraphs 8, 10, 11, 14 and 16 of resolution 2170 (2014) and paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 5 of resolution 2178 (2014) by providing all manner of support for terrorists and allowing tens of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters to cross from Turkish territory into Syria, as has been acknowledged by the head of the Turkish regime.

The Turkish military operation in northern Syria constitutes a flagrant attack against the territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and a violation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. In particular, it violates paragraph 4 of Article 2, which provides that all States shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. The Turkish aggression has led to the deaths and injuries of hundreds of civilians, most of them women and children. It has also displaced tens of thousands of Syrians from their homes, particularly in the city of Afrin and surrounding villages, and destroyed infrastructure and cultural and historical property, including the archaeological remains of the Ayn Darah temple in the northern Aleppo countryside, which date back to the first millennium B.C.

The Turkish regime's claim that it is committed to a political solution in Syria does not correspond to reality. That regime has supported terrorism in Syria relentlessly and attempted to undermine any political effort aimed at sparing the blood of the Syrian people. Similarly, the regime's claim that it is committed to the territorial integrity and political unity of Syria and is undertaking its "military operation" with a view to contributing to and furthering those political principles is specious. Turkey has merely replaced Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) with other terrorist groups. It is carrying out attacks and perpetrating massacres against civilian inhabitants and destroying infrastructure, services facilities and even archaeological sites. It has unrelentingly violated Syrian sovereignty by continuing to appropriate Syrian territory and build fortifications and separation walls therein. That is not to mention the theft of relics and public and private property.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the presence of any foreign military forces on its territory without its express consent constitutes aggression and occupation, and will be treated as such. In that regard, it calls on the Turkish regime to cease its military aggression against the Syrian Arab Republic, withdraw its military forces from inside Syria and halt its support for terrorist organizations and its policies of violating the unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that all of the Turkish regime's attacks and actions targeting the sovereignty and territorial unity of the Syrian Arab Republic and its occupation of Syrian territory will not alter the legal status of that territory or the fact that it belongs to the Syrian Arab Republic, and will not result in any way in the curtailment or denial of the legal sovereign rights of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Syrian Arab Republic calls on the Security Council not to allow any State to use force in a manner contrary to international law or to use the Charter of the United Nations as a pretext for acts of aggression. The Charter should not be held hostage by such States and interpreted in accordance with narrow interests that are at odds with the letter and spirit of the Charter. It should be noted that the representatives of the United States, Britain and France at the United Nations, who weep loudly and hypocritically on behalf of Syrian civilians, have not uttered a single word about the Turkish crimes in Afrin.

The Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by putting an end to the Turkish regime's attacks against the sovereignty and territorial unity and integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and that regime's support for terrorism, and to hold it accountable.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mounzer **Mounzer**
Minister Plenipotentiary
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

United Nations A/72/721–S/2018/83

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Report of the Peacebuilding Commission

Security Council
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Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its eleventh session

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), in which the Peacebuilding Commission was requested to submit an annual report to the Assembly for an annual debate and review. The report will also be submitted to the Council, pursuant to its resolution 1646 (2005), for an annual debate. The report covers the eleventh session of the Commission, held from 1 January to 31 December 2017.

2. The report has also been prepared pursuant to identical resolutions on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)), in which the Commission was encouraged to review its provisional rules of procedure through its Organizational Committee, as well as to consider diversifying its working methods to enhance its efficiency and flexibility in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

3. In that regard, the structure and content of the present report reflect the work carried out by the Commission in implementing relevant recommendations contained in the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture and the priorities identified in the report of the Commission on its tenth session.

II. Work of the Peacebuilding Commission

A. Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: opportunities and challenges

4. The work of the Commission at its eleventh session was characterized by efforts to implement the recommendations contained in the above-mentioned resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. In those resolutions, both the General Assembly and the Security Council identify sustaining peace as:

> a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which

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> encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development, and emphasizing that sustaining peace is a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by the Government and all other national stakeholders, and should flow through all three pillars of the United Nations engagement at all stages of conflict, and in all its dimensions, and needs sustained international attention and assistance.

Throughout the reporting period, the Commission addressed an increased number of country-specific, regional and thematic issues to help sustain attention to and enhance coherence in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Country-specific situations

5. With respect to Burundi, the Commission pursued its broad re-engagement with the Government, national stakeholders and the international community in support of regional efforts to overcome the current crisis and with a focus on mitigating its socioeconomic impact on the population. In March 2017, the Chair of the Burundi configuration travelled to the country, where he briefed the President of Burundi and other high-ranking interlocutors on the socioeconomic consultations that he had organized with the United Nations, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the African Development Bank in Geneva in November 2016. During the same trip, he co-hosted a working lunch with the Government and the Resident Coordinator ad interim on the country's socioeconomic challenges, the macroeconomic situation and ways to mobilize support for ongoing responses. The visit also allowed the Chair to gain first-hand insight into the engagement of the Peacebuilding Fund in Burundi. On his way to Burundi, the Chair met with the facilitator of the East African Community, Benjamin Mkapa, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania and the World Bank, and other interlocutors in Dar es Salaam. On 21 April, the Chair of the configuration undertook a trip to Washington, D.C., in order to pursue his engagement with the World Bank and IMF. He also met with the Minister of Finance of Burundi, who was in Washington to participate in the Spring Meetings of the international financial institution. In July, the Chair again travelled to Burundi, where he attended a follow-up socioeconomic retreat organized by the Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation. Its main objective was to identify the main socioeconomic challenges faced by the country in the areas of agriculture/food security, health and education and to discuss possible responses, as well as to identify the challenges of cooperation. In their joint conclusions, the Government and the participating partners expressed their wish to continue the socioeconomic dialogue and involve additional partners. In October, the Chair of the configuration used the opportunity of a visit to Addis Ababa to meet with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of External Relations and International Cooperation of Burundi, high-ranking representatives of the African Union, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa and the Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union.

6. The Commission continued to encourage and support dialogue aimed at resolving the political crisis, including the engagement of relevant actors from the region. In parallel, it continued to serve as a platform for dialogue between Burundi and its development partners, with a view to assessing the country's humanitarian socioeconomic and macroeconomic challenges and creating incentives for overcoming the obstacles that have stalled international cooperation. The Commission's engagement with Burundi has been guided by a coherent approach. In

that regard, meetings held in New York and visits carried out to Burundi benefited from extensive briefings and discussions on progress and challenges.

7. In terms of the Central African Republic, the Commission sought to sustain the international commitment expressed at the donor conference held in Brussels in November 2016. The Commission presented, with the approval of its membership, a workplan dedicated to the implementation of, and the provision of sustained support to the international community for, the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. In that regard, the Commission organized a meeting attended by the President of the Central African Republic in March 2017, providing a platform for high-level engagement and a reaffirmation of the commitments made at the Brussels Conference in support of the Plan. In June, the Commission organized a meeting on pillar I (security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the rule of law and reconciliation) of the Plan, which allowed the Minister of Justice of the Central African Republic and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic to update members on both the progress made and the challenges faced in the implementation of that crucial pillar. The Chair of the Central African Republic configuration then travelled to the country in July to engage with the Government and other national stakeholders, as well as regional and international stakeholders, on the country's peacebuilding and recovery agenda and to discuss the progress made in the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, with a focus on resource mobilization and coherence. Following the visit, the Chair drew the attention of the Government and the international community to the risk of further sectarian violence. On the basis of his report, the Commission advocated a reinforcement of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and additional efforts to promote social cohesion and community reconciliation. The Commission reiterated those recommendations at the high-level side event on the Central African Republic co-convened by the President of the Central African Republic and the Secretary-General on the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly on 19 September.

8. At the request of the Government of Colombia, the Commission convened a meeting on 13 November 2017 to discuss the peace process in that country. Participants highlighted the success story of Colombia, welcoming in particular the strong national ownership of the peace process and the advantage of having solid and democratic institutions. The fact that the funding mechanisms for support from the international community had been created in anticipation of the needs of the peace process, and that the mechanisms had been brought together under one government office, was identified as an important step in allowing for better coordination and alignment with government priorities. The Minister for Post-Conflict, Human Rights and Security of Colombia and the General Director of the Territorial Renewal Agency highlighted the developments over the previous year and the challenges ahead. They emphasized that national reconciliation was a key factor and stressed the need for comprehensive rural reform that would remove the divide between urban and rural areas. The Minister also described the efforts being made to harness private sector support for the peace process through special tax regimes. Two leaders of Colombian civil society shared their personal stories about living through conflict and the hardship that their communities had faced. The Resident Coordinator for Colombia emphasized that the United Nations was fully committed to supporting the implementation of the peace agreement. Several speakers welcomed the engagement of the Peacebuilding Fund, which, by acting swiftly and flexibly, could help to jump start the process for the implementation of the programmes related to the peace agreement.

9. At the request of the Government of the Gambia, the Commission held several meetings. The discussions were focused on assisting the country at its critical time of transition and maintaining international attention and support with respect to the new Government of the Gambia. The Chair of the Commission, the Permanent Representative of the Gambia to the United Nations and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support visited the country on 20 and 21 March 2017 and met with a wide range of stakeholders, including the President of the Gambia, ministers, the leadership of the armed forces and the police, the Chief Justice, the Independent Electoral Commission and representatives of civil society organizations and the diplomatic community, to gain a better understanding of the situation on the ground as well as of the Government's priorities in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Following the visit, on 19 April, the Commission convened for the first time a meeting on the Gambia to discuss the peacebuilding priorities of the new Government as well as the rapid allocation by the Peacebuilding Fund of resources to support the country's efforts for transitional justice and security sector reform.

10. The Commission convened another meeting on the situation on 4 December to maintain international attention and support with respect to the peacebuilding priorities of the Gambia. The Attorney General and Minister of Justice briefed the Commission on the Government's ongoing efforts to promote transitional justice, in particular the draft bill on the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission. The Resident Coordinator also gave a briefing on the overall situation in the Gambia and the efforts of the United Nations to support the peacebuilding priorities of the Gambia in a coherent manner. The Commission welcomed the Government's strong commitment and efforts to build and sustain peace in the country and discussed ways to provide further support for such efforts.

11. In connection with Guinea, pursuant to a review of the scope of the country's engagement with the Commission, initiated in 2016 at the request of the President of Guinea, on 12 July 2017 the Commission decided to terminate the Guinea configuration while maintaining the Commission as a platform for supporting Guinea in a flexible manner, at the request of the Government.

12. With regard to Guinea-Bissau, the focus of the Commission's work was to support the finding of a solution to the two-year political impasse in the country. Through statements made to the Security Council, press statements and consultations held in New York, the Commission provided support for the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to implement the six-point Roadmap for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau and the Conakry Agreement on the Implementation of the ECOWAS Roadmap. During his trip to Bissau in July 2017, the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration engaged in consultations with a broad range of stakeholders, including the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the President of the Supreme Court and a number of ministers and members of political parties. The Chair also met with the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. In Lisbon, on his return journey, the Chair met with the Executive Secretary of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and discussed the role of the Community in supporting Guinea-Bissau and helping to find a solution to the political situation. The Commission was briefed by government officials, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau and civil society organizations, including the women's facilitation group, throughout the year. Those consultations, as the Chair reported to the Security Council in August, highlighted the complexity of the political impasse. While the Conakry Agreement remains a fundamental point of reference for most political actors, it continues to be the subject of conflicting interpretations.

13. In view of the preparations for the legislative elections scheduled for May 2018 in Guinea-Bissau, the Chair of the configuration met with the representatives of the

National Electoral Commission during his trip to Bissau, and in December the Commission was briefed on the developments in the country, including the major peacebuilding projects being carried out there. While the National Electoral Commission had finalized a timeline for the elections, the Peacebuilding Commission was also informed that preparatory steps would have to be taken, including updating the voter registration lists and appointing a new President of the National Electoral Commission.

14. In respect of Liberia, the Commission prioritized two key issues: the development and implementation of the country's peacebuilding plan, and support for the transition from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to a follow-on United Nations presence. On 20 March, the Government of Liberia submitted the peacebuilding plan requested by the Security Council in its resolution 2333 (2016). In that connection, the Commission played a strong role in supporting the work of the Government and UNMIL in Monrovia and worked closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Political Affairs in New York. In Monrovia, the Peacebuilding Support Office facilitated the efforts of the various ministries and departments of the Government of Liberia in the development of the peacebuilding plan. The Commission convened a series of meetings at both the expert and ambassadorial levels to propose inputs for the draft plan and monitor its implementation after its submission to the Council in March 2017. Key issues raised at those meetings included the need for consultations with civil society, political actors, the United Nations country team and the donor community, and for the plan to build upon existing frameworks related to peacebuilding, such as the Agenda for Transformation and the statement of mutual commitments on peacebuilding in Liberia.

15. Regarding the transition from UNMIL to a follow-on United Nations presence, the Commission actively engaged with the leadership of the Mission through a visit by the Chair of the Liberia configuration and the convening of ambassadorial and expert meetings. The Commission recommended the continuation of the good offices role and political accompaniment of the United Nations, as well as the provision of the expertise needed for political analysis and the implementation of the peacebuilding plan after the closure of UNMIL. The Commission drew the attention of members of the Security Council to the high risks associated with the imminent resource "cliff" after the Mission's closure and strongly advocated the securing of reliable funding and the creation of a multi-partner trust fund to provide financing for the transition. Furthermore, the Commission organized a series of meetings on the preparations for the 2017 legislative and presidential electoral process, providing a platform for representatives from the National Electoral Commission, non-governmental organizations and regional observer missions to present their analysis and identify challenges. In that regard, the Peacebuilding Fund supported a project focused on enhancing the participation of young people in the elections. Finally, both in the interactions of the Chair of the Liberia configuration during his trip to Liberia and in statements made to the Council, the Commission advocated the adoption of reforms needed to address the root causes of the conflict, including decentralization, gender and land reform.

16. With regard to the preparations for the presidential, parliamentary and local council elections to be held in March 2018 in Sierra Leone, the Commission held several meetings to provide a platform for discussions among the Commission's members, representatives of the Government of Sierra Leone, the National Electoral Commission and civil society, as well as the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies working in the country. The Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration travelled to the country and met with a broad range of stakeholders to maintain the interest and

support of the international community regarding Sierra Leone as it entered a crucial electoral process and to ensure that the necessary resources had been secured.

17. On 7 June, at the request of the Government of Solomon Islands, the Commission convened a meeting that testified to the importance of assisting the country in undergoing transitions by providing long-term perspectives on peacebuilding. At a time when the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands was withdrawing from the country, the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands had requested the Commission to provide its platform in order to discuss the good practices and current challenges of his country. The meeting marked another important step in the implementation of recommendations contained in the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, particularly in connection with the importance of strengthening the synergies between the Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund. The participants in the meeting benefited from briefings by senior officials of the United Nations, including the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the Resident Coordinator, representatives of the Pacific Islands Forum and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and a youth representative. Moreover, the Prime Minister recognized the critical role played by the Fund and called for a partnership between his Government and the Commission.

18. On 20 November, at the request of the Government of Sri Lanka, the Commission convened a meeting to discuss the peacebuilding experiences of the country. The meeting was attended by the Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Secretary-General of the Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms and a representative of civil society in Sri Lanka. The meeting was focused on the country's comprehensive efforts to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity, examining socioeconomic development, reconciliation efforts and transitional justice initiatives undertaken by the Government to date. It was an important opportunity for the Commission to discuss the ways in which the United Nations could support the Government in the future. Speakers also underlined the need for an inclusive approach to facilitate lasting peace, highlighting the positive role that women, young people and civil society could play in the country's peacebuilding process. The role of the Peacebuilding Fund in supporting the peacebuilding priorities of Sri Lanka was a particular focus, and participants underscored the importance of such discussions as a good practice to enhance coherence between the Commission and the Fund. Representatives also noted that the Commission, as an intergovernmental platform that Member States could use to share their good practices and challenges in peacebuilding and sustaining peace, was providing an opportunity for conflict-affected countries to identify common peacebuilding trends and learn from their respective experiences.

Regional situations

19. On 20 January, the Security Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/2) emphasizing the importance of the convening role of the Commission in peacebuilding efforts and thus, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), in mobilizing deeper commitment and partnership between the United Nations system, the countries of the Sahel and other international and regional partners with a view to advancing the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel in collaboration with UNOWAS. In response to a request made by the Council, the Commission held a meeting on 6 March to discuss the situation in the Sahel. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, the High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel, the Permanent Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel and representatives of UNDP and the Peacebuilding

Support Office briefed the Commission. Several speakers highlighted the importance of a regional approach in addressing cross-border challenges and strengthening partnerships. In that connection, the Commission recognized the unique role of the Peacebuilding Fund in supporting cross-border peacebuilding initiatives in the region. The Commission encouraged efforts to enhance coordination and cooperation among the countries in the region, the United Nations and other regional and international actors. A number of members highlighted the need to go beyond the peace and security response and strengthen development and humanitarian assistance to effectively address the challenges facing the Sahel region.

20. The Chair of the Commission, together with the Permanent Representative of Chad to the United Nations and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, attended the fifth meeting of the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel, held in Chad on 14 June. A number of speakers pointed out the continuing fragile security situation in the Sahel, despite the multiple initiatives focused on the region, and called on the relevant actors to act with greater cooperation and solidarity. Many participants reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining the Platform as the political coordination framework to foster coherence and coordination among the various efforts to address the challenges in the region.

21. On 19 June, the President of the Security Council convened an informal interactive dialogue on the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin with the Peacebuilding Commission, in which a number of members recognized that the challenges facing the Sahel region went beyond the security dimension.

22. The Commission also convened a joint meeting with the Economic and Social Council on 28 June. The Deputy Secretary-General, together with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and the Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of UNDP, participated. The event was focused on ways to overcome the multidimensional challenges facing the Sahel region by addressing the root causes of crisis pertaining to the social, economic and environmental factors in the region. Member States discussed the importance of continuing the efforts of the Council and the Commission to support a coordinated and coherent United Nations response to the peacebuilding challenges in the Sahel. The efforts being made to address the cross-border challenges facing the Sahel region to foster stability, build the resilience of communities and enhance economic opportunities were deemed important. Several delegations noted that the Council could use its coordination and oversight role with respect to the United Nations development system to promote a coordinated and coherent approach in the Organization's response. The Commission expressed its readiness to continue to assist UNOWAS, regional institutions and all countries in the Sahel area through its peacebuilding work.

23. The Commission convened another meeting on 13 December. The Deputy Secretary-General briefed the Commission on the ongoing efforts within the United Nations system to enhance coordination and coherence in the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, including through the mapping of the 17 strategies implemented by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and through the development of a United Nations investment plan to support national and regional initiatives in the Sahel. The Deputy Secretary-General also explained broader coordination efforts with other regional and international partners, including the African Union, the G-5 Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, ECOWAS and the European Union.

24. On 27 November, the Commission used its platform, with the consent of the States of the Great Lakes region, to raise awareness of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016–2017. The Commission was briefed by the Special Envoy

of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the former Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, representatives of the United Nations Development Group and the World Bank, and the Permanent Representative of the Congo to the United Nations, as current Chair of the Conference. The meeting showcased the Commission's convening role in bringing together the United Nations, relevant regional organizations and international financial institutions with the core countries of the region. A number of speakers raised awareness of the importance of an integrated regional peace and security, humanitarian and development approach to addressing the root causes of conflict. The meeting also highlighted the complementarity of United Nations and World Bank investments in the region and, as a result, strengthened efforts to achieve a coherent policy approach among actors working across the region. Several Member States also pointed to the need to provide additional support to the Great Lakes cross-border multi-partner trust fund, which had been building on the initial investment of the Peacebuilding Fund, for the Burundi-United Republic of Tanzania cross-border project. The investment highlighted the Fund's expanding support for cross-border projects as well as the increasing linkages between the Commission and the Fund.

Thematic issues

25. In 2017, the Commission benefited from the support of Member States informally acting as focal points. That support contributed to the Commission's work relating to the thematic issues identified below.

National ownership

26. Throughout 2017, the Commission continued to promote the pivotal importance of national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding efforts, which are factors essential for their success. This was confirmed, inter alia, during the discussion on Colombia, which reaffirmed the validity of the twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. While national Governments and authorities bore primary responsibility for identifying, driving and directing priorities, strategies and activities, the responsibility for sustained peace was broadly shared among all national stakeholders.

Gender

27. During the reporting period, the Commission continued the implementation of its gender strategy, adopted in 2016. The Chairs of the country configurations routinely met with women leaders during their missions to the field. Substantive inputs to the Commission were circulated in advance of its annual session, advocating increased attention to gender issues during the discussions. Throughout the discussions on the closure of UNMIL, the Commission ensured consistent attention to women's concerns and priorities in the context of the transition in Liberia.

Youth

28. In their discussion on regional or country-specific situations, several Commission members repeatedly stressed the relevance of including young people in peacebuilding strategies. Furthermore, a thematic meeting on youth, peace and security was organized in June 2017 to brief the experts of the Commission on the progress study on the positive contribution of youth to peace processes and conflict resolution, mandated by the Security Council in its resolution 2250 (2015), and its emerging key messages. The lead author of the study, who had been appointed by the Secretary-General, explained that the study had been an opportunity to think tactically about how to invest in the positive contributions of young people as part of a prevention approach. The vast majority of young people did not engage in violence,

but the recognition of their positive contribution and investment in their work remained limited, which called for a shift in the way that Governments and the international community engaged with the youth population. A number of Member States highlighted that young people were vital in addressing the vulnerabilities in conflict-affected countries and fostering resilience to violent extremism, and that these discussions were important for Member States in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Some also pointed out that young women and men were facilitators of peace and security and should be fully integrated into the political, economic, social and cultural spheres in their countries.

Financing

29. Following the deliberations of the Commission's annual session in June 2017, on 13 October the Commission convened a meeting to discuss innovative financing. Members noted that for the United Nations, innovative financing had two objectives: first, it could increase resources for the Organization's financial instruments focused on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, which currently relied solely on voluntary contributions from Member States; and second, it could unlock, where relevant, private sector resources to support peacebuilding at the national level. In the past few decades, the composition of financial flows to conflict-affected countries had changed significantly. Official development assistance was highest during conflict, but, as peace became sustainable, foreign direct investment and national financial resources increased as a percentage of financial flows. Member States should consider developing policies and strategies that supported this needed change in the financing mix. The importance of including South-South and triangular cooperation was also highlighted. It was observed that the Commission could be an avenue for exploring opportunities to work with the private sector by taking into account potential sensitivities, especially in country-specific contexts.

30. Financing was also an important element of the Commission's discussion on situations in transition. The resource and expertise "cliff" created by the closure of long-standing peacekeeping operations had had a negative impact on the ability of Governments and the international community to sustain gains made and prevent relapses into violence. In the case of Liberia, with the closure of UNMIL in March 2018, there was an urgent need to secure predictable sources of financing to support priority areas outlined in the peacebuilding plan for that country. On 27 June, the Chair of the Liberia configuration made a statement to the Council on the urgent need to safeguard the investment made in consolidating peace in Liberia through peacekeeping, and to secure reliable funding. The Commission provided a platform for the United Nations leadership in Liberia to present and discuss with Member States a mapping exercise identifying the financing and expertise gaps that would result from the closure of UNMIL. Subsequently, the Commission supported the establishment of the multi-partner trust fund for the Liberia transition, which will be a time-bound mechanism for securing predictable funding for the United Nations system and partners after the Mission's closure. It is hoped that the trust fund will mobilize an estimated $130 million over three years.

Institution-building

31. The importance of better addressing the root causes of conflict and supporting institution-building in countries affected by conflict, while fully respecting the ownership of national Governments in that regard, was highlighted throughout 2017, including the establishment of sound institutions to address cross-border issues such as border control in the Sahel and the strengthening of criminal justice systems in post-conflict countries such as Guinea.

B. Towards a more flexible and effective Peacebuilding Commission

The bridging role of the Peacebuilding Commission: the work of the Commission with the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council

32. The resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture call on the Commission to serve as a bridge among the principal organs and relevant entities of the United Nations. In that connection, throughout its eleventh session, the Commission continued to explore ways to enhance its advisory role with respect to the General Assembly and the Security Council and its bridging role between the Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The first opportunity to do so was a high-level dialogue organized by the President of the General Assembly on 24 January 2017, which brought together, inter alia, the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission.

33. In relation to the Security Council, the Commission fulfilled its advisory functions through: (a) an annual informal interactive dialogue co-organized by the President of the Council and the Chair of the Commission; (b) periodic stocktaking at the expert level; and (c) formal briefings to the Council on country-specific and thematic issues. The annual informal interactive dialogue, held on 19 June 2017, offered an opportunity to discuss practical ways to strengthen coordination, coherence and cooperation between the Council and the Commission. The dialogue represented an opportunity to take stock of the work of the Commission in response to the Council's presidential statement of 20 January 2017 (S/PRST/2017/2), which emphasized the importance of the convening role of the Commission in peacebuilding efforts, and thus in mobilizing deeper commitment and partnership between the United Nations system, the countries of the Sahel and other international and regional partners with a view to advancing the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel in collaboration with UNOWAS. A number of participants pointed out that the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin faced complex and multidimensional challenges that touched upon not only political and security dimensions, but also humanitarian and development dimensions. These included transnational and cross-border challenges such as terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, illicit trafficking and other transnational crimes, weak institutions, climate change, migration and the displacement of populations. It was noted that those challenges and root causes of crisis in the region could be addressed by strengthening partnership with national authorities in the area of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with the assistance of the international community. In that connection, the Commission, by virtue of its unique role, could bring together the countries concerned, United Nations actors, regional and subregional organizations and international financial institutions. Discussions also highlighted how the United Nations system could use its capacity in addressing cross-border challenges and how, in that regard, the Peacebuilding Fund was one of the few mechanisms of the United Nations to undertake cross-border programming.

34. Two informal expert-level meetings were held, on 21 April and 30 November, to focus on the advisory role of the Commission in connection with country-specific issues and with regard to the Sahel. The discussions highlighted how the Commission could assist UNOWAS in implementing the integrated strategy and support the Security Council discussions on the drawdown of UNMIL. A number of good practices that could strengthen the advisory role of the Commission were also discussed, with focus placed on its advisory role in connection with the situations in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia; on the establishment and maintenance of strong partnerships with regional organizations;

and on the structuring and planning of its work in a way that would enrich its advice to the Council.

35. With regard to country-specific briefings to the Security Council, the Chairs of the country configurations provided the Council with substantive updates on key peacebuilding priorities defined by the countries concerned. The Chair of the Burundi configuration kept the Council apprised of the socioeconomic challenges in that country and his efforts to support dialogue between Burundi and its partners on four occasions. In August, the Council, in a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/13), welcomed this active engagement of the Commission, particularly the socioeconomic retreat held in Bujumbura in July. With respect to the Central African Republic, in July the Chair of the configuration, following his visit to the country, drew the Council's attention to the risk of escalation of the sectarian violence based on the situation in Bangassou. He recommended that the Council factor that risk into the process of renewing the mandate of MINUSCA. In connection with Guinea-Bissau, the Commission continued its advocacy of strong support for the ECOWAS-led process for finding a peaceful solution to the political crisis in the country. Regarding Liberia, the Commission provided active support for the development of the peacebuilding plan mandated by the Council in its resolution 2333 (2016). In addition, the Chair of the Liberia configuration called the attention of Council members to the urgent need to secure reliable funding for the United Nations transition after the drawdown of UNMIL.

36. During a meeting on the theme "Building synergies for peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Africa: how can the United Nations and the African Union and its regional mechanisms enhance their strategic partnership?", jointly organized on 26 April by the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, several members pointed out the relevance of the Commission in enhancing synergies among the United Nations, the African Union and subregional organizations.

37. In relation to the Economic and Social Council, as indicated above, a joint meeting with the Commission was held on 28 June to discuss the situation in the Sahel. The event was focused on the multidimensional challenges in the Sahel and addressing the root causes of conflict pertaining to the social, economic and environmental factors in the region.

38. On 25 July, the Chair of the Commission was invited to brief the Economic and Social Council at its coordination and management meeting. The Chair underscored the importance of a multidimensional approach that went beyond security responses, referring to the joint meeting between the Commission and the Council held on 28 June. Building on the good practices of the Commission, the Chair underscored the importance of a number of principles that were guiding the work of the Commission, such as respect for national ownership, the fact that security, development and human rights were closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing, the importance of ensuring an appropriate level of support for conflict-affected countries and countries undergoing transition, and the gender dimension of peacebuilding.

Contributing to United Nations system-wide coherence

39. On 28 September, the Commission convened a meeting to hear a briefing by the Secretary-General on the ongoing reform processes in the United Nations, and how these related to the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. The meeting provided an opportunity for Member States to discuss, inter alia, the contribution of the Commission to the strengthening of United Nations coherence. The Secretary-General noted that the Commission, as an advisory body with respect

to both the General Assembly and the Security Council, had an important role to play in bridging and enhancing coherence with those two bodies. He added that a strengthened Commission would support change in the way that business was conducted in the Secretariat. A number of delegations pointed out the importance of preserving unchanged the established mandates of United Nations bodies as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Some of them noted that the Commission, through its bridging role and convening power, had an important role in the implementation of the review processes. Several Member States also reaffirmed the importance of revitalizing the Peacebuilding Support Office, including in the areas of resource mobilization, peacebuilding partnerships and enhanced support for the Commission.

40. The importance of strengthening coordination and coherence within the United Nations also emerged as a key outcome of the informal retreat of the Commission organized on 16 and 17 November by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the Peacebuilding Support Office. At the retreat, members of the Commission had the opportunity to informally discuss the main elements of the upcoming report of the Secretary-General mandated by the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture.

41. The Commission continued to support efforts aimed at United Nations inter-agency cooperation and coherence, including at the country level. In Burundi, for example, the United Nations country team and the Chair of the configuration jointly participated in two round-table consultations with the Government on the socioeconomic situation. Those discussions helped to strengthen the policy and programmatic coherence of the country team in terms of addressing the socioeconomic impact of the crisis and contributed to a United Nations country team resilience strategy for Burundi. Some delegations suggested that the resident coordinators be invited more systematically to meetings of the Commission when their respective countries of residence were being discussed.

Fostering partnerships

42. Throughout the eleventh session, the Commission worked to strengthen partnerships with a number of relevant actors. In connection with the partnership with the World Bank, on 5 June the Chair and a number of other members of the Commission met in Washington, D.C., with the leadership of the World Bank, including the President, Vice-Presidents and members of the Executive Board. The objective of the meeting was threefold: (a) to establish a closer working relationship between the Commission and the Bank, in the context of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture and the updated United Nations-World Bank partnership framework signed on 22 April 2017; (b) to identify and deepen collaboration with the World Bank on country-specific situations under consideration by the Commission; and (c) to discuss ways to promote an institutional partnership between the World Bank and the Commission. Participants agreed that the visit had laid a solid foundation for scaling up closer collaboration between the Bank and the Commission. The importance of the assistance of the private sector, where relevant, was pointed out.

43. On 11 April, the Commission convened an expert-level meeting to discuss the initial findings of the United Nations-World Bank study entitled "Pathways for peace: inclusive approaches to preventing violent conflict". During the discussion, which benefited from briefings by senior officials of the United Nations and the World Bank, several Member States highlighted the importance of comprehensive and coherent approaches to addressing the root causes of violent conflicts and the centrality of a strong partnership between the United Nations and the World Bank in that regard.

44. On 30 June, the Commission convened its fourth annual session to discuss the topic "Partnerships for financing for peace". The meeting was an opportunity for the Commission to bring together Member States and partners, including the United Nations system, international financial institutions, regional organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, to discuss ways to work together in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The discussions benefited from an interactive session with the Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations and the Chief Executive Officer of the World Bank, as well as from presentations made by senior government representatives, senior officials of the United Nations and representatives of civil society organizations.

45. During the opening session, the Commission and the World Bank issued a joint statement reaffirming the importance of continued attention to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and decided to hold an annual dialogue between the members of the Peacebuilding Commission and senior representatives of the World Bank, including members of its Executive Board, with a view to strengthening the partnership and discussing issues of mutual concern, including how development approaches could complement peacebuilding efforts at the regional and country levels.

46. Throughout the discussion, participants recognized that adequate financing for peacebuilding and sustaining peace would require strengthened partnerships and the alignment of financial flows. Partnerships among multilateral organizations were highlighted as a core component of increasing complementarity and building the right capacities in the right places. In addition, several participants underscored the relevance of the private sector, which was emphasized as the place where the reintegration of ex-combatants occurred, as well as the integration of displaced victims of violence. Given the role of the private sector, where relevant, in peacebuilding, business acumen and business education were highlighted as important foundations in that regard.

47. The Commission continued to strengthen its partnerships through its country-specific work. With regard to Liberia, in support of the peacebuilding plan, the Commission engaged the High-level Advisory Group, which it co-chairs with UNDP. A small team of experts was dispatched to Monrovia in early February to work with the Government of Liberia and UNMIL during the first round of consultations on the document, including with political parties and civil society. In that context, the recovery and peacebuilding assessment, a planning methodology based on the 2008 Joint Declaration on Post-Crisis Assessments and Recovery Planning signed by the United Nations Development Group, the World Bank and the European Commission, was activated to support the Government in developing the peacebuilding plan.

48. In respect of Guinea-Bissau, one of the key priorities for the Commission in 2017 was to strengthen coordination with the relevant regional and international partners with a view to supporting the country's peacebuilding efforts. The objective was to increase synergies and complementarities that would be beneficial for an effective peacebuilding endeavour in Guinea-Bissau. A key element was the active engagement and support of the Commission with respect to the framework of the "Guinea-Bissau P5".

49. The resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture stress the importance of partnerships and cooperation between the United Nations and relevant regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, to improve cooperation and coordination in peacebuilding, increase synergies and ensure the coherence and complementarity of such efforts. The resolutions also urge the Peacebuilding Commission to hold regular exchanges of views with relevant regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union. In that connection, following up on a visit to the headquarters of the African Union in 2016, the then-

Chair led a delegation of the Commission to Addis Ababa from 6 to 8 December 2017 to discuss ways to enhance the cooperation between the Commission and the African Union, focusing on the countries and regions being considered by the Commission. The Chair was accompanied by a Vice-Chair (Kenya), the Chair of the Central African Republic configuration and Ambassadors representing countries that had engaged with the Commission throughout the year, including Burundi, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone. The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support also accompanied the delegation.

50. The delegation also held a meeting with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on 7 December. On the margins of the meeting, the delegation also met with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union. Those meetings provided additional opportunities for the Commission to further strengthen its engagement with the African Union in terms of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the countries and regions being considered by the Commission. They underlined the need for the United Nations and the African Union to enhance their coordination so as to better address the root causes of conflict and support institution-building in Africa.

51. On 7 and 8 November in Seoul, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, in its capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission and in partnership with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the Peacebuilding Support Office, organized an Asian conference on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The conference represented an opportunity to raise awareness with respect to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Asia. Speakers, who included representatives of Member States, academia, civil society and the United Nations, underscored, inter alia, the universality of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the importance of fostering strong partnerships in support of conflict-affected countries, the primacy of politics and the necessity of ensuring that national ownership was respected. Invited participants, mostly from countries members of the Commission and Asian countries, welcomed the opportunity to exchange views on peacebuilding issues and to share experiences relating to peacebuilding in such countries as Cambodia, Colombia, the Gambia, Nepal, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka. Several participants also referred to the important role of the Commission as an intergovernmental platform for policy-related discussions and to the Peacebuilding Fund as a financial instrument to build and sustain peace.

Strengthening synergies between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund

52. In implementation of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, and building on its previous work, the Commission continued to strengthen synergies with the Peacebuilding Fund by ensuring an improved flow of information from the Fund to the Commission in three ways: (a) inviting the Peacebuilding Support Office to provide updates on the work of the Fund at regional and country-specific meetings of the Commission; (b) inviting the Chair and members of the Advisory Group of the Fund to brief the Commission on the findings resulting from the meetings of the Group; and (c) inviting countries that are receiving financing from the Fund, in particular countries declared eligible by the Secretary-General, to brief the Commission on their peacebuilding priorities, progress and challenges.

Rules of procedure and working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission

53. In implementation of paragraph 5 of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, the Commission continued the review of its provisional rules of procedure and working methods that it had initiated at its tenth session, in

order to make its work more flexible and effective. In that connection, the Commission, building on the recommendations contained in the annex to its report on its tenth session (A/71/768-S/2017/76), convened a number of expert-level consultations, which culminated in a document that it informally adopted on 18 December (see the annex to the present report) to guide its work.

III. Conclusions and agenda going forward

54. The next reporting period will present another important opportunity for the Commission to implement the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. In that regard, the Commission will continue to pursue several important work streams that could further strengthen its country-specific and policy-related engagements.

A. Implementation of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture

55. The Peacebuilding Commission, together with the Peacebuilding Support Office, will continue to implement the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, in addition to the actions identified under each of the strategic priorities identified below.

Action:

(a) The Organizational Committee will convene periodic discussions to ensure the implementation of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture;

(b) The country configurations will implement the relevant recommendations of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture.

B. The bridging role of the Peacebuilding Commission: the work of the Commission with the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council

56. The Commission will explore concrete ways to further strengthen its role as a bridge among the principal organs and relevant United Nations entities.

Action:

(a) The Chair will consult with the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council and the President of the Economic and Social Council on ways to strengthen synergies between their respective bodies and the Commission;

(b) The Chair will consult with the President of the General Assembly in preparation for activities that can feed into the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, to be convened in 2018 in accordance with the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture;

(c) The Organizational Committee will draws upon the main findings of the stocktaking exercise, undertaken in 2017, of its advisory function with regard to the Security Council and consider practical ways to implement them; to that end, the Committee will nominate one of the members of the Commission to coordinate the periodic stocktaking exercise in an inclusive manner;

(d) The Chair will coordinate with the presidency of the Security Council to prepare for the convening of informal interactive dialogues;

(e) The Chair will consult with the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa to explore ways to enhance an informal exchange of views on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with a focus on Africa;

(f) The Chair will coordinate with the presidency of the Economic and Social Council in preparation for the convening of a joint event, which may be held in conjunction with the upcoming annual session of the Commission;

(g) The Chair of the Commission and the Chairs of relevant country configurations will continue to ensure that, at the request of the Security Council, their periodic formal briefings to the Council on the countries concerned will be synchronized with the timing of their field visits and will be focused on specific areas to which the Council's attention has been drawn.

C. Partnerships and engagement with other stakeholders

57. The follow-up to the fourth annual session of the Commission will be carried out in 2018. The follow-up exercise will provide guidance to the Commission in its preparations for the fifth annual session, including the selection of a theme that would help elaborate the identified policy areas requiring further development. In that regard, the Commission will strengthen its collaboration with international financial institutions, regional organizations and, where relevant, the private sector.

Action:

(a) The Organizational Committee will convene informal discussions with the participation of relevant United Nations entities, international financial institutions, regional organizations and development banks, with the aim of exploring those specific policy areas requiring further elaboration during the fourth annual session. Interested States Members of the United Nations that are not members of the Peacebuilding Commission will also be invited;

(b) The Organizational Committee will coordinate with the World Bank on ways to strengthen collaboration between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Bank, including by implementing the recommendations of the joint statement issued by the Commission and the Bank on 30 June 2017.

D. Towards a more flexible Peacebuilding Commission

58. The Commission will continue to consider diversifying its working methods to enhance its efficiency and flexibility in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Action:

(a) The Organizational Committee will continue to provide a platform to countries, at their request, that are receiving funds from the Peacebuilding Fund, in particular those that are declared eligible by the Secretary-General to share their peacebuilding experiences and challenges;

(b) The Organizational Committee will continue its consideration of regional and subregional dimensions of peacebuilding, with the consent of all countries concerned;

(c) The Organizational Committee will implement its gender strategy, where relevant, in accordance with the modalities indicated in the strategy;

(d) The Organizational Committee will continue its consideration of the provisional rules of procedure and working methods of Commission. The Committee will report on the progress made in the improvement of the Commission's working methods in its next annual report.

E. Financing for peacebuilding: strengthening the synergies between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund

59. The Commission will continue to discuss ways to create stronger synergies between the Commission and the Fund.

Action:

The Organizational Committee, with a view to ensuring that it is constantly informed of the activities of the Peacebuilding Fund, will convene periodic meetings with the Peacebuilding Support Office or with members of the Advisory Group of the Fund.

Annex

Working methods of the Peacebuilding Commission

The present document contains recommendations whose objectives and outcomes have been established as good practices, and that can be addressed through an informal process. These recommendations are accompanied by relevant examples. It also includes additional action areas whose implementation can contribute to the efficiency and flexibility of the Commission. The Commission can implement all of these actions without the need to amend its provisional rules of procedure and within the mandate of the founding resolutions of the Commission, General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), as well as Assembly resolution 70/262 and Council resolution 2282 (2016). The review of the Commission's working methods is an ongoing process, and this informal document will be reviewed periodically, through the Commission's annual reports, in order to assess the added value of the recommendations to the work of the Commission.

Recommendations

1. **Leadership**: The Commission should improve the continuity of its Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

Action:

I. As mandated by paragraph 5 of both General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), which encourage the Commission to improve the continuity of its Chairs and Vice-Chairs, and building upon the established practice of having the outgoing Chair serve as Vice-Chair, thus ensuring continuity and support to its leadership, the Commission will continue to explore ways to further strengthen the continuity of its Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Any informal arrangement will not prejudge the change in the membership of the Commission, which takes place every two years and will operate within regional rotation of Chairs, as spelled out in annex I of the Commission's provisional rules of procedure. The decision to endorse a candidate for each post remains a prerogative of the respective regional groups, for action by the Organizational Committee.

II. Make greater use of the Vice-Chairs, in consultation with the Chair, in the organization and conduct of Peacebuilding Commission meetings.

Good practices: over the past few sessions, the outgoing Chair served as Vice-Chair, thus ensuring continuity and support to the incoming Chair. Vice-Chairs supported the Chair by presiding over a number of thematic discussions.

2. **Forms of engagement of the Commission**: while recognizing the value of the work done by the Commission, including through country-specific configurations, the Commission should consider flexible options for other forms of engagement, including a more engaged role of the Organizational Committee.

Actions:

I. Make greater use of the Organizational Committee as a platform to convene country-specific, regional and thematic discussions, with the consent of all countries concerned, in accordance with its founding resolutions. When convening regional discussions, references to country-specific situations shall be made with the consent of those countries, which shall be shared with the Members of the Committee.

II. Promote a Commission that can work in a form of "variable geometry", where the character, focus and duration of its engagement are decided on an ad hoc basis in order to strengthen its efficiency and flexibility, including with the countries partnering with the Commission.

Good practices: the meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission on Burkina Faso, Colombia, the Gambia, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka; the regional discussions on West Africa, the Sahel and the Great Lakes; and the thematic discussions on financing for peacebuilding, which included Papua New Guinea, Somalia and Kyrgyzstan.

3. **Role of the membership**: the Commission has a very diverse membership, bringing together seven members from the General Assembly, seven members from the Security Council, seven members from the Economic and Social Council, five members from the top troop-contributing countries and five members from the top financial contributors. Therefore, a stronger engagement of all members of the Commission will further enhance its efficiency.

Actions:

I. Make greater use of the perspectives of the organs that elect or designate the members of the Commission: in addition to country-specific interests, Member States elected by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council are encouraged to bring perspectives of those bodies into the deliberations of the Commission. For example, members can offer advice on the working methods of their constituencies and can highlight relevant ongoing thematic issues in their respective organs that will add value to the work of the Commission and reinforce synergies between the Commission and the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the relevant subsidiary bodies, while respecting the mandate of each body.

II. Members are encouraged to report back to their constituencies on the work done by the Peacebuilding Commission on priority areas that are relevant for the work of their respective organs or groups, and to advocate peacebuilding and sustaining peace. This will add to the visibility of the Commission and enhance clarity on the work of the Commission. Similarly, establishing a predictable workplan (see action 3 below) and summarizing results on a regular basis can lead to a more regular flow of information between the Commission and the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

III. Members of the Commission are encouraged to actively engage and support the work of the Chair and the Vice-Chairs, while avoiding duplication of work and enhancing the idea of one Peacebuilding Commission.

IV. The Chair, with the consent of Member States, including those being considered by the Commission, should enhance the convening platform of the Commission by inviting additional partners to participate in meetings of the Commission. Such partners may include Member States that are not members of the Organizational Committee, representatives of relevant entities of the United Nations system, international financial institutions, regional and subregional organizations, civil society organizations, including youth and women's organizations, and, where relevant, the private sector.

Good practices: the annual session of the Peacebuilding Commission is a good example of how the Commission has brought together various partners from the United Nations system and beyond, including representatives of civil society. Discussions pertaining to the regional dimensions of peacebuilding, as well as country-specific and thematic discussions, such as the informal meeting on good practices in transition with Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone and the meetings on Colombia, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka, included representatives of relevant United Nations departments and of civil society organizations. Member States made efforts to support the Chair by taking the lead on various thematic issues to foster greater knowledge and engagement by the Commission's membership, acting as focal points on issues such as financing for peacebuilding, gender, institution-building, national ownership and youth.

4. **Workplan**: a more predictable and longer-term workplan that would allow broader participation of Member States at the meetings of the Commission.

Actions:

I. The Commission is to adopt an annual workplan based on the forward agenda contained in the Commission's annual report. The workplan is to be further developed and, in accordance with the current practice, circulated for consideration by the Organizational Committee on a quarterly basis and, on a monthly basis, listing the dates of meetings, activities and visits of the Commission in all its configurations. Additional previously unscheduled meetings to be added, if required.

II. The workplan is to take into account the relevant calendar of work of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, particularly when it comes to activities where the advisory role of the Commission may be sought. In such cases, the Commission should organize its workplan in a way that strengthens its advisory role.

III. The Chairs of country configurations are to present their calendar of work earlier in the beginning of each quarter.

IV. The workplan is to include a more regularized engagement of the Commission with regional and subregional organizations.

Good practices: the forward agenda of the annual reports of the Commission has been useful in guiding the work of the Commission. Following the Chair's visit to Addis Ababa from 17 to 19 October 2016, the Commission held discussions on the African Union's recommendations for holding annual meetings and organizing joint field visits. The quarterly and monthly workplans of the Commission have been useful tools to better align the work of the Commission with the calendar of the Security Council and to facilitate Member States' engagement with the Commission.

5. **Bridging role**: resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016) stress the importance of the Commission in promoting an integrated, strategic and coherent approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and, inter alia, in serving a bridging role among the principal organs and relevant United Nations entities. The resolutions also recognize that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

Actions:

I. The Commission is to better utilize its membership to strengthen its links with the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council (see also actions 2.I and 2.II) to efficiently address

issues regarding peacebuilding and sustaining peace and to advocate peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

II. In connection with the Commission's advisory role to the Security Council, in addition to its engagement so far, when invited to brief the Council it should prepare its briefings by aligning its workplan with relevant Security Council meetings (see action 3.II). The activities of the Commission in preparation for these briefings may include internal thematic discussions in anticipation of issues to be discussed in the Security Council, visits to the field, including, when invited by the Council, joint visits with the Council to advance peacebuilding perspectives and the organization of meetings to engage with relevant stakeholders, including international financial institutions, United Nations entities and civil society organizations.

III. Through this advanced preparation, and the uniqueness of the Commission's convening power, it can have sustained interactions and enhance its efforts to provide the Security Council with substantive advice, upon request, for example, in matters relating to the synergies between security and development. Similarly, regular exchanges between the Commission and other subsidiary organs of the Council should be further enhanced.

Good practices: the meetings of the Commission with the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa in 2016 represented good opportunities to exchange views on issues pertaining to peacebuilding in Africa. Furthermore, the participation of the Chair of the Commission in the high-level dialogue of the President of the General Assembly, the fifth informal interactive dialogue between the members of the Security Council and the Commission (June 2017), the Commission's advisory role to the Security Council, and the Commission's joint event with the Economic and Social Council (June 2017) were examples of how the Commission can implement its mandate to play a bridging role among relevant United Nations bodies.

IV. The Commission is to advocate a coherent and predictable use of resources for peacebuilding activities, including with international financial institutions, and for innovative financial instruments.

6. **Synergies between the Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund**: while preserving the independence of the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, look at ways to strengthen the synergies between the Commission and the Fund, and to ensure that Member States remain informed on the ongoing projects of the Fund.

Actions:

I. The Peacebuilding Commission is to hear presentations by countries receiving funds from the Peacebuilding Fund, in particular when peacebuilding priority plans are discussed.

II. The Commission is to invite the Chair and the members of the Advisory Group of the Peacebuilding Fund to meetings of the Commission, when relevant.

III. Regular briefings by the Peacebuilding Support Office on the activities of the Fund at the meetings of the Commission would be useful.

Good practices: the working relationship between the Commission and the Fund during the Ebola crisis; the meetings on financing for peacebuilding (Papua New Guinea and Somalia, in 2015; Kyrgyzstan, in 2016, which also included a representative from the Fund's Advisory Group); and the discussion on Solomon

Islands represent innovative ways to keep the Commission informed of progress that countries make with support from the Fund.

7. **Format of Commission meetings (open or closed)**: ensure that there is a balance between transparency/outreach and confidentiality of the Commission's deliberations. The Commission, in all its meetings and formats, and with the consent of Member States, should enhance inclusivity and ensure that participation reinforces an integrated Organizational Committee and the concept of a unified Peacebuilding Commission. The Peacebuilding Support Office is to continue ensuring that mechanisms of reporting back to the Organizational Committee on all Commission activities are in place.

Actions:

I. In preparation for the meetings of the Commission, the Chair, upon consultation with the countries concerned, should announce whether the meetings are to be open or closed.

8. **Visibility and communication**: there is a need to address the lack of awareness, both within and outside the United Nations, about the work of the Commission and on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Actions:

I. The Commission is to explore ways to increase the visibility of its open meetings, in particular high-level events such as the annual session, to attract more attention from the media.

II. The Commission is to explore ways to increase ongoing activity on the web and on social media with regard to all of its meetings and country visits.

United Nations S/2018/84

Security Council

Distr.: General
1 February 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 1 February 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the fifty-second monthly report of the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The report covers the period from 22 December 2017 to 23 January 2018.

As previously reported, 25 of the 27 chemical weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic have been verified by the OPCW Technical Secretariat as having been destroyed. Following an initial inspection at the remaining two sites, OPCW has been working with the United Nations Office for Project Services to make the arrangements necessary to assist the Syrian Arab Republic in destroying these two facilities.

I take note of the work being undertaken in the context of outstanding issues relating to the declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic and reiterate the importance of resolving these issues. I trust that the Syrian Arab Republic will extend the full cooperation necessary to OPCW in this regard. I further note that the results of the second inspection by OPCW at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre of the Syrian Arab Republic will be reported in due course.

The work of the OPCW fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic is ongoing, including through the visit of a team from the fact-finding mission to Damascus in January, at the request of the Government. I note that the fact-finding mission is continuing to study all information available relating to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the country and, in this regard, I reiterate my grave concern over continuing allegations of such use. No justification exists for the use of these weapons, by any party and under any circumstances, nor is there any justification for impunity for their use.

The fact of these continuing allegations again highlights the shared obligation to identify and hold to account those responsible for the use of chemical weapons. This obligation did not end with the mandate of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. Accordingly, I reiterate my call for the Security Council to demonstrate unity on this matter.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

18-01512 (E) 010218

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Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme", prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1, and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 22 December 2017 to 23 January 2018 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

Note by the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

Background

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015) noting the Director-General's intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria, along with information on the Council's discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled "Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director-General's intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.

4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled "OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall "regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1".

5. This, the fifty-second monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 22 December 2017 to 23 January 2018.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

6. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) The Secretariat has verified the destruction of 25 of the 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. As previously reported, in November 2017 the Secretariat conducted an initial inspection

of the last two stationary above-ground facilities in accordance with paragraph 44 of Part V of the Verification Annex to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Thanks to the voluntary contributions provided by States Parties to the Syria Trust Fund for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons, including contributions provided in response to the Secretariat's Note S/1541/2017 (dated 9 October 2017), the Secretariat, together with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), has begun to make all the required arrangements to assist the Syrian Arab Republic in the destruction of the facilities located at these two sites.

(b) On 18 January 2018, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its fiftieth monthly report (EC-87/P/NAT.4, dated 19 January 2018) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

7. As stated in previous reports, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have now been destroyed.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5

8. During the reporting period, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) completed the translation of the 19 documents submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic on 10 November 2017. The analysis of the documents is being finalised, and the results will be reported to the Council at its Eighty-Seventh Session, in March 2018.

9. As stated by the Director-General in his opening statement to the Conference of the States Parties at its Twenty-Second Session (C-22/DG.20, dated 27 November 2017), the second round of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in accordance with paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5 was concluded on 22 November 2017. The samples taken during the mission were sealed, packaged and shipped to the OPCW Laboratory, and were received at the Laboratory in the presence of representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic on 15 January 2018. The samples will be split, also in the presence of representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, upon their request, and sent to two OPCW designated laboratories for analysis. A report on the second round of inspections will be submitted in due course.

Other activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

10. UNOPS continues to provide support to the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with an agreement concluded between UNOPS, the OPCW, and the Syrian Arab Republic on 22 November 2017.

11. As at the cut-off date of this report, one OPCW staff member was deployed as part of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Supplementary resources

12. As previously reported, a Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the OPCW FFM and other remaining activities, such as those of the DAT. As at the cut-off date of this report, the total contribution stood at EUR 15.7 million. Contribution agreements had been concluded with Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Monaco, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Sweden,

Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

13. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 23 November 2015), as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), the FFM continued to study all available information relating to the allegations of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

14. In response to Note Verbale 109 (dated 17 November 2016) from the Syrian Arab Republic, which transmitted information relating to incidents and requested that the Director-General dispatch OPCW experts to investigate these incidents, an FFM team was dispatched to Damascus from 7 to 12 January 2018. The FFM team recovered and transported biomedical and environmental samples to the OPCW Laboratory.

Conclusion

15. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the activities of the FFM and on the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration-related issues, as well as on the verification of the destruction of the two stationary above-ground facilities, and annual inspections of the underground structures already verified as destroyed.

United Nations S/2018/85

Security Council

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2 February 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 1 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, under the presidency of the State of Kuwait, the Security Council plans to hold a ministerial briefing on Wednesday, 21 February 2018, on the theme "Purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security".

In this regard, Kuwait has prepared the attached concept note (see annex). I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex would be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mansour **Al-Otaibi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the
State of Kuwait to the United Nations

18-01541 (E) 070218

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Annex to the letter dated 1 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council briefing on the theme "Purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security", to be held on 21 February 2018

Introduction

For more than seven decades, since the inception of the United Nations, the world has faced a myriad of peace and security challenges, such as the traditional inter-State challenges of threats, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression. More recently, these challenges have become increasingly complex and have expanded to include threats and attacks at the hands of terrorists and other non-State actors and spoilers, as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, civil strife, human rights violations, climate change and difficulties in building and sustaining peace, to name but a few. Since its creation, the United Nations has faced many trials and tests in handling many of these challenges.

Enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations is a set of purposes and principles, all of which are cardinal pillars of international order and form the basis of contemporary international relations and international law, and which, if adhered to, contribute significantly to the peaceful coexistence among Member States of the Organization. Furthermore, the Charter provides a significant toolkit to confront the aforementioned traditional and contemporary challenges in order for the Security Council to follow through on its primary responsibility: the maintenance of international peace and security. There are a number of success stories of the Council to this end. The liberation of the State of Kuwait in February 1991 was a vivid example of the Council's ability to utilize the tools available in the Charter to act collectively and uniformly to carry out its responsibility and duty as conferred upon it in Article 24 of the Charter, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Under its presidency of the Security Council for the month of February 2018, the State of Kuwait will hold a ministerial briefing on the theme "Purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security" on 21 February 2018, 27 years since the liberation of the State of Kuwait. The briefing will provide a platform to reaffirm the Council's commitment to and respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter. It is also a timely opportunity, in the light of the contemporary peace and security challenges facing the international community, for the Council to discuss how best to utilize the tools in the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Context: utilizing the tools at the disposal of the Security Council

Since the founding of the United Nations in 1945, the Charter of the United Nations has served as the primary international legal instrument in establishing the framework for international relations between States, on the basis of a set of purposes whose lofty aspirations include the maintenance of international peace and security, the removal of threats to the peace through effective collective measures, the suppression of aggression or other breaches, the development of friendly relations among nations, respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and the promotion and encouragement of respect for human rights. Complementing these purposes is a set of principles that are equally important in

shaping the boundaries of international relations and serve as the guiding force that governs the relationships between States. The principles include the sovereign equality of all Member States, the peaceful settlement of disputes, refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of another Member State and non-interference.

Nevertheless, the world has seen time and time again how situations or disputes rapidly escalate into threats to regional and international peace when the purposes and principles are not adhered to and respected. In such instances, the Charter serves as the guarantor and primary instrument for the peace and security of the international order and provides the Security Council with a set of tools to carry out its functions and duties. Some of these tools are, unfortunately on many occasions, overlooked by the Security Council, or they are not used comprehensively to address a conflict or threat to the peace. At times, violations are so flagrant that they not only violate Security Council resolutions but also pose a challenge to the Charter, an example in which a collective approach by the Council is required to safeguard the international order.

The tools at the disposal of the Council are aplenty, ranging from the classical diplomacy of the pacific settlement of disputes as outlined in Chapter VI of the Charter to the more action-oriented approach with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression as referred to in Chapter VII. In addition, Chapter VIII provides a platform for regional arrangements to address matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. These chapters contain a spectrum of tools at the disposal of the Security Council, and when those tools are implemented, they often prove to be an effective means to restore peace and the rule of law.

In this regard, it is pertinent to consider the current state of world affairs. The Secretary-General, at the beginning of 2018, issued "an alert — a red alert for our world". Conflicts have continued unabated, and humanitarian suffering, as a result of the repercussions of these conflicts, has reached unfathomable figures. The Security Council has a responsibility, in the face of these peace and security challenges, to demonstrate a stronger and renewed commitment to the tools provided for in the Charter to address them.

Objectives and focus of the briefing

During the briefing, Council members may wish to focus their statements on the following:

- Emphasizing the importance of compliance with and adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, while drawing attention to the risks that undermine their implementation
- Discussing means to best utilize the tools available to the Security Council as set out in Chapters VI, VII and VIII, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter, for the Council to discharge its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security as outlined in Article 24. Council members are encouraged to consider ways of:
  - Recommitting to Chapter VI of the Charter for the peaceful settlement of disputes by "negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement" or other peaceful means
  - Strengthening conflict prevention measures in order to avert a conflict at its initial stage, while noting that the Charter contains strong language on this matter

  - Making more effective use of sanctions as a tool to exert leverage against spoilers in order to support a political process
  - Determining when best to utilize the concept of collective security, and using armed force to restore international peace and security, in accordance with Chapter VII
  - Strengthening the rule of law as part of the Security Council's responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, such as through the establishment of criminal tribunals
  - Exploring the regional and subregional arrangements in Chapter VIII as a tool to be utilized more effectively

- Emphasizing the role of the Secretary-General in connection with the maintenance of international peace and security, and looking at the following:
  - Article 99 of the Charter, in which it is stated that "the Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security"
  - The Secretary-General, at the beginning of his tenure, called for a "surge in diplomacy for peace" and outlined prevention as a priority during his term in office. This briefing, which comes just over a year since that call, provides an opportunity for Council members to support the Secretary-General's vision in this regard
  - The Secretary-General is working to reform the peace and security architecture of the United Nations "to ensure we are stronger in prevention, more agile in mediation, and more effective and cost-effective in peacekeeping operations", as he stated previously. This briefing is a timely opportunity to hear from him on this matter

- Reflecting on examples in which the Security Council was able to best utilize the tools at its disposal to restore international peace and security, as well as the lessons learned from them. The process of the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation in 1991 was indeed a historic and unprecedented achievement for the Security Council. It lives on as a testament to the capability of the international community to adhere and commit to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, thus embodying the concept of collective security as well as the maintenance of international peace and security

This meeting provides an opportunity for the members of the Security Council to hear from the Secretary-General on this topic and to exchange views on how to effectively address the traditional and contemporary challenges of our times in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Briefer

The Secretary-General.

Outcome

No outcome of the Security Council is envisioned. A summary of the proceedings of the ministerial briefing will be issued by Kuwait in its national capacity in due course.

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